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EXPLANATION
OF THE
RULE OF
ST. AUGUSTINE

BY
HUGH OF ST. VICTOR

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EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF ST AUGUSTINE

BY

HUGH OF ST VICTOR

CANON REGULAR

TRANSLATED BY

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In quorum fide, etc.

Romæ ex Cædibus S. Petri ad Vincula
die 28 Novembris an 1910.

✠ J. B. STROZZI,
Abbas Generalis.

L✠S

AUGUSTINUS MARLANGEON, C.R.L.,
Secretarius.

Nihil obstat.


GEORGIUS CANONICUS MULLAN,
Censor deputatus.

Imprimatur.

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DEDICATED
TO THE
CANONESSES REGULAR OF THE LATERAN,
AT WHOSE SUGGESTION
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PREFACE

THE following explanation of the rule of St Augustine, taken from the works of Hugh of St Victor, is here presented in English form to those that live under the rule of St Augustine, and to whom it is not easily accessible in the original Latin.

The reflections of the celebrated Canon Regular must be prized as emanating from one highly qualified to discourse on this admirable legacy of St Augustine to his children. Hugh gives evidence of an intense love of that rule himself. Under its guidance he speedily rose to a great height of religious sanctity. Moreover, Hugh of St Victor has been styled a "Second Augustine" ("alter Augustinus") for his intimate familiarity with the works of our Holy Legislator, and for his personal similarity of character, in many respects, to that of the early Father.

Hugh, eldest son of Conrad, Count of Blankenburg, was born at Hartingham, in Saxony, in the year 1096. He was educated at Hamerlene, near Habberstadt, and took the habit of the Canons Regular of St Augustine in the same place. Before

he had completed his novitiate, the disturbed state of the country caused him to leave, and Hugh was received as a member of the Community of the Canons Regular of St Victor, at Paris. The famous school of these canons was then at the height of its reputation. William of Champeaux, founder of the school, and his successors, of whom Hugh was one, joined with St Bernard in defending the integrity of the faith against the prevalent errors taught and diffused by Abelard and others. At an early age Hugh was made master of the school. His whole life consisted of the exercises of religious life, teaching, writing, and study. He contributed in an important measure to the whole range of the knowledge of his time. In philosophy he stands high amongst the scholastics. In theology, it has been said of him that he was "the most influential theologian of the twelfth century."¹ As a mystic, Hugh is well known as the founder of that movement which was continued and perfected by Richard of the same community. The writings of our author proclaim the depth of his piety and the intensity of his spiritual life. All knowledge—and he was most assiduous in cultivating it—was only a means to the end of serving God. According to his doctrine: "Thought seeks God in the material world; meditation discovers Him within ourselves; contemplation knows Him supernaturally and intuitively. Such are the 'three

¹ Harnack, quoted in the Catholic Encyclopædia article, "Hugh of St Victor," which has been freely used in compiling these notes.

eyes' of the rational soul." "What is it to be wise," he asks, "but to love God? for love is wisdom."

Hugh of St Victor died in 1141.

It is related of him that in his last sickness, "with earnest and fervent devotion" he begged that the Holy Communion might be brought to him. His brethren were pained to have to withhold this last consolation, as the patient suffered from frequent vomiting. And as he constantly renewed his request an unconsecrated host was brought to him. It was granted to the holy man to recognise the deception, and he exclaimed: "No; that is not the Body of my Lord, with which every true Christian longs to be united!" The Blessed Sacrament was then brought to his bedside. Unable to receive the Sacramental Presence of his Lord, he cried: "Let the child return to his Father and the servant to his Master."

Shortly after, this, his last prayer, was granted. That these reflections of the pious Canon Regular may give some increase to the religious spirit and to devotedness to the rule of St Augustine is the wish and prayer of

THE TRANSLATOR.

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Explanation of the Rule of St Augustine

CHAPTER I

OF THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE NEIGHBOUR,
AND OF THE UNION OF HEARTS AND COM-
MUNITY OF GOODS

DEARLY beloved, we ought, above all things, to love Almighty God and then our neighbour; for these are the principal precepts delivered to us in Holy Scripture.

These commands that follow are called a Rule, because in them is expressed the pattern of holy living. Now a rule is so named because it is the source of direction and instruction.

Where we speak of a rule, the Greeks use the term *Canon*. Hence from the Greek the name canons or regulars is also applied to those who live in religious houses and lead a canonical and apostolical life, according to the precepts of regular observance laid down by the holy Fathers. To such, then, it is said:—

These are the things that we command you to observe, who are gathered together in the monastery.

Unto this end the divine precepts are read to us, that they be understood and carried out. In consideration of this, we must fear the judgment expressed in these words: "That servant who knows the will of his Lord and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke xii. 47). Hence St Paul says: "Not the hearers of the law . . . but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13).

Let us then give ear to the behests of our loving Lord, and "be mindful of his commands to do them" (Ps. cii. 18). For as St James says: "He that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." And our Lord says in the Gospel: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke xi. 28). Wherefore let us give humble heed to the things commanded unto us who dwell in the monastery.

First, the reason that you are gathered together in one is that you dwell with concord in the house: and that you possess but one soul and one heart in God.

Here, in the first place, we have counsel regarding unity and agreement: such agreement, namely, as will arise from living together in God. To unite with others for any bad purpose would in itself be evil; but an agreement to do good, to pursue justice, and to serve God is productive of much good. This is the end for which we are

gathered in one: namely, that we may have one spirit and one soul in the service of God. And therefore the command is that we dwell together in the same house and have but one soul and one heart in God.

Indeed it is but right that, if we are corporally drawn together, we dwell together spiritually also. For it is of no avail that the same walls encompass us if difference of will separate us—since God regards rather unity of mind than of dwelling. Behold, we are a number of individuals under one roof, with different ways of acting, different hearts, different wills: all which one intention and one love of God must weld together in unity. We must therefore, in this matter, be of a single mind and a single will, that we may give our service to God and love God with our whole heart and with our whole soul and our neighbour as ourselves.

Therefore the virtue of concord is necessary for us, and it will be attained if each sister, as she comes to the convent, sets to work to despoil herself of her own will and imitate Him who says: "I came not to do my own will" (John vi. 38); and again: "Father, not as I will but as thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). For what chiefly conduces to concord is that each one study to do the will of another unto good, rather than his own. This is the sign of a great humility. Thence also obedience is begotten; thence charity, peace justice, and all Christian virtues draw their increase. Whereas if I seek to carry out my own will and

another is intent upon following hers, forthwith divisions arise and quarrels, anger and dissensions spring up, all which are the works of the flesh. And as the Apostle says: "They who do such things shall not obtain the Kingdom of God" (Gal. v. 21). Some are found in the Congregation stubborn in their own views and wise in their own opinion, so that whatever comes into their mind they stand up for as though it were dictated by reason: and they never offer to give way to others, but strive to bend all to themselves. And if they find that they are not humoured they are straight-way troubled and disturbed. Such usually withstand the orders of their seniors; and often the passion of disobedience and impatience gains strong rule over them.

Such persons are not likely to maintain harmony with others. "For," according to the expression of the Apostle, "they became vain in their thoughts and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. i. 21, 22). In truth, pride is a blindness of heart, and it is foolish wisdom to wish to prefer oneself to others. And so, on the other hand, the same Apostle says: "If any man among you seem to be wise . . . let him become a fool that he may be wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18). The fool in this sense is truly wise, because before God it is great wisdom to judge oneself the inferior of all. So it is written: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things" (Eccles. iii. 20). Thus when

a dispute arose amongst the disciples as to which of them were the greatest, our Lord at once recalled them to humble agreement amongst themselves in these words: "He that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a redemption for many" (Matt. xx. 27, 28).

Therefore let us dwell together in harmony. "For it is good and pleasant in God's sight for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. cxxxii. 1). Our fasts and prayers are not so agreeable to Him as this harmony, and therefore He says in the Gospel: "Go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then, coming, thou shalt offer thy gift" (Matt. v. 24).

And from these words it appears that whoever has not the spirit of concord is unable to offer any sacrifice to the all-powerful God. We must then ponder of how great worth in God's sight is this virtue of concord without which the very sacrifices whereby sins are cancelled are not acceptable to Him.

We must also take into account that at the time of our change of life we declare perpetual warfare against the devil. Now there is nothing he fears so much as the unity of charity. For if we give away all we possess for God's sake—this the devil does not fear, because he himself possesses nothing. If we fast, he has no fear of our action because he does not use food himself. If we make

long watchings, again he is not alarmed, for he himself never slumbers. But when we are united in brotherly love, then he is intensely affrighted—because we hold firmly here upon earth the treasure that he thought light of keeping in heaven.

So it is that Holy Church, described as an army in battle array, inspires terror, because as the enemy fears at the sight of the battle line well ordered and compact, so in the same way the devil trembles when he beholds persons of spiritual life armed with the weapons of virtue living together in the unity of concord. He grieves most deeply in his defeat when he fails to break through their ranks and separate them by discord. Hence it is written of our Lord: "His place is in peace: . . . there hath he broken the powers of bows, the shield, the sword, and the battle" (Ps. lxxv. 3, 4). We see then that concord shatters all the weapons of the evil one.

Let there be among you but one heart and one soul in God.

The heart and soul here spoken of are the first-fruits of the spirit that we are to offer to God at the very outset of our conversion to the interior life as Wisdom herself has bidden us, where it is said: "Son, give me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 26). Through the heart and the will we are first drawn to God, so that if we are cut off from this world in body, let us see that we be united to God in heart and soul that we may say in all truth: "It is

good for me to adhere to my God" (Ps. lxxii. 28). "For he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17).

Let us then cling to Him that we may be strong through Him, that we may be one with Him, that we may be content with Him, and say to Him, "My soul hath stuck close to thee" (Ps. lxii. 9). The love of God tears us away from the world, and this same love will link us to God. So will there be amongst us but one heart and one soul in God, if with our whole heart and our whole soul we all love God. "God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). And as Charity seeks not her own interest, the next precept is rightly added:—

You shall not therefore call anything your own, but all things shall be in common.

We must look upon nothing as our personal property nor call any object *mine* or *thine*. We should rather say *our* cape, *our* tunic, *our* house, and so on of all other things that we use. For we must hold all things in common, and speak of them accordingly.

Herein we may take note of the difference between sisters in the flesh and spiritual sisters in religion. The former share between them what was given them in common: the latter bring to one common stock what was divided among them. In the case of the first, each one looks for her part; the others "seek not the things that are their

own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. ii. 21). The spiritual is thus more noble than the natural relationship. That of nature gradually weakens, the spiritual is ever growing; the natural tends to division, the spiritual to union; the natural passes away with this world, the spiritual abides even in the world to come. The reason of our living now together in this house is that hereafter we may continue together in the heavenly kingdom. "We are now the sons of God," says the beloved apostle, "and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John iii. 2). And St Paul: "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 14). Wherefore we must not have any private ownership but let all things be in common. Men of the world would fain increase their share of this world's goods: some covet gold and silver, others houses and families, others a great name, influence, and glory. One is allured by one object, another by something else, and all strive by various paths to achieve their various projects. But the portion of holy souls is God Himself. If we would be possessed of such a portion, such a heritage as is our Lord, it behoves us so to order our life that we may deserve to possess Him and be ourselves possessed by Him. That is to say, if we would possess God as our lot, we must have nought outside of God, for he is avaricious indeed for whose desires God is

not enough. If we look for any other object, as, for instance, gold, silver, or property, God will disdain to be shared with such things. Here the words of St Jerome are appropriate: "I take no share of inheritance with the other tribes, but as a priest and levite I live by the tithes: as I serve the altar I am maintained by the offerings made at the altar, and having food and clothing, with these I am content, for 'blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt. v. 3).

But as long as we are in this life, we are subject to bodily needs, and in reference to these the rule continues:—

Food and clothing shall be distributed to each by your superior.

Our Lord so ordered His Church that some should be free to surrender themselves entirely to a spiritual life, whilst others should serve them in their temporal needs. So, too, He would have some as superiors and others as subjects. It belongs to the superiors to provide the temporal things required by those placed under them, while the service of the subject is to apply herself to spiritual pursuits: to devote herself to reading, prayer, and contemplation, and serve her heavenly Master in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles. The duty of watching over themselves is the more pressing as they are freed from all outward care to this end.

The Lord has appointed that they who serve

the altar should live by the altar—as He Himself says: “The labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke x. 7). If we live thus upon the revenues of Christ, it is but just that we dedicate ourselves to the service of Christ—receiving our wage when we have proved ourselves honest labourers. “If any man will not work, neither let him eat” (2 Thess. iii. 10), said St Paul. Wherefore if we take our sustenance and do not throw ourselves into our work, we are guilty of so much the greater fault, as we have of our own will put ourselves in the condition of needing this special bounty of God.

Thus it is our duty to serve Him by whom we are fed, if with a safe conscience we will partake of what is distributed; and all the more earnest must we be in our allotted work, as we receive our maintenance without any grievous labour to procure it.

What wonder is it that those who are engrossed in temporal business and are unable to maintain a high degree of fervour or much religious practice should often transgress in thought and word and deed? The mere contact with the world tends to lead men to sin even against their will. But it is otherwise with those who have been relieved of the cares of the world and of many an occasion of evil. The less virtuously they live the more grievously do they offend the Supreme Judge, nor can even their smallest negligences be overlooked without serious peril to their souls. Let us then

think why it is that food and clothing are freely distributed to us. The reason is that the one desire of our life may be "to seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice," in consequence of which all other things will be added unto us.

Next is explained how the distribution of temporal goods is to be made:—

Not in the same measure to all, because all have not the same need, but rather to each one according as he shall require.

For this direction St Augustine adduces apostolic authority:—

For so you read in the Acts of the Apostles: "All things were common unto them" (iv. 32). "And distribution was made to every one according as he had need" (*Ibid.* 35).

This is not to be taken in the sense that such an allowance was made for the need of every one that they had to endure no want whatever. It is indeed written: "Neither was there any one needy among them" (Acts iv. 34); but we also find it recorded of the Apostles themselves that "they served God in hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. xi. 27). We gather, therefore, that while many suffered in the body they were not afflicted in spirit. Those that deny themselves for Christ's sake can well endure the pains of nature in virtue of the strength they receive in their souls. The love of God, that is stronger than death, is able not only to repress

sinful desires, but also to assuage those feelings of pain that arise from sense and nature.

So abundant was the outpouring of spiritual grace in the Early Church, that not only were the faithful content with little, but they esteemed it joy of the highest kind to feel that they had nothing of their own. "Having nothing, yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. vi. 10). So another saint has said: "Our poverty was sufficient for us that we might account it as riches" (Job v. 25). And again the Apostle says: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. . . . Having food and where-with to be covered, with these we are content" (1 Tim. vi. 6, 8). In this matter, then, regard must be had, not to the desires of the flesh, but to each one's natural constitution. The satisfaction of the desires of sensuality involves much more than bare necessity. So that under the precept of providing what is needed for every one, the practice to be adopted is that the flesh be nourished in such a way that it may be fit to give its due service, and on the other hand, that it be kept under so that it may not proudly revolt against the spirit. Let the needs of nature be attended to so that at the same time the abundance begetting concupiscence may be retrenched.

Let those that had property in the world at the time of their entry into the monastery, be prepared willingly to place all in common.

This is what was done by the brethren of the

Early Church. To them it seemed right, that having the grace of faith in common, they should also hold their worldly substance in common: having one spirit they should have but one source of maintenance. With reason, too, is the term *libenter*, willingly, used; for "God loves the cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7). Willingly should we surrender earthly, in order to acquire heavenly goods. The Kingdom of Heaven is well worth all that you are possessed of. Nothing is bought more cheaply, nothing is more precious to keep when once acquired. Two things we must renounce for God's sake: the right to possess and the wish to acquire. Therefore our Lord says in the Gospel: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 33). And again: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Luke ix. 23). The first of these divine utterances refers to earthly goods: the second to the will. For it is not enough to give up exterior possessions, unless we cut off all interior concupiscence as well. Whence it is added:—

Those that had not property in the world must not in the monastery look for those things that outside they were unable to have.

Even those persons who had nothing outside may find within the monastery something to forsake for God, and that is the will to possess. It is written: "Thou shalt not covet" (Exod. xx. 17)

—because God looks rather to our desires than to what we actually have. So it is said by the mouth of the wise man : “My Son, give me thy heart” (Prov. xxiii. 26). And this cannot be done if carnal desires be not first cut away. First, then, we are bidden to forsake what we have ; then to refrain from seeking earthly goods, that we may after this more freely yearn for heavenly goods. They who were poor in the world are commanded not to expect more in the monastery than they previously enjoyed. Still, lest it might be thought, in consequence of this order, that necessities were not to be meted out to them also, this further injunction follows :—

Nevertheless they also shall have out of the common what their need or infirmity requires, although their former poverty was such that they wanted even the necessities of life.

All that enter the service of Christ justly live by the revenues of Christ, be they rich or poor, of noble or of humble birth, for “the labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. v. 18).

Yet they must not think themselves happy because in the cloister they have found such food and raiment as they could not find out of it,

There are some that enter upon the religious vocation less with a view to their soul’s salvation than to corporal necessity : whose first thought is rather personal need than God, and of whom

the Apostle may be understood to say: "Whose god is their belly" (Phil. iii. 19). To such as these our Lord says in the Gospel: "Amen, I say to you, you seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves" (John vi. 26). The one thought and happiness of this class of persons is set upon their food, clothing, and temporal well-being. Inasmuch as they hanker after worldly things they forfeit heavenly pleasures. "They have," as our Lord says, "received their reward" (Matt. vi. 16). Wherefore above all things should we beware lest we cling to these temporal benefits, according as the psalm admonishes us: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them" (Ps. lxi. 11).

For the sweetness proceeding from God has in itself a certain wonderful and limitless abundance; so that these words have been spoken concerning it: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). Whence again it is written: "I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear" (Ps. xvi. 15). This kind of satiety must be our happiness.

CHAPTER II

OF HUMILITY

NEITHER may they carry themselves proudly because they are become fellow-companions of those into whose society they durst not have presumed to enter in the world ; but let them lift up their hearts to heaven, and not seek vain earthly things. For if this be not observed, the convent will be profitable to the rich and not to the poor, if therein the rich become humble and the poor are puffed up with pride.

To carry the head high is a mark of pride. If heaven itself was of no benefit to the proud angels, it stands to reason that the cloister will not be beneficial to proud man. And though the place be holy, and the habit holy, and the round of occupations seems to be holy, everything will prove to be useless through the vice of pride. Pride will have its fall. That is why holy David prayed to the Lord : " Let not the foot of pride come to me : . . . There the workers of iniquity are fallen, they are cast out and could not stand " (Ps. xxxv. 12, 13). On the other hand, how full

of blessing is the convent to the humble! For these are docile under God, who, as it is written, "will teach the meek his ways" (Ps. xxiv. 9), "who sends forth springs in the vales" (Ps. ciii. 10), that is to say, God gives His grace to the humble.

They suffer no loss of the good works they perform, for they never give up humility, the guardian of all virtues. And because, following the Gospel precept, they sit down in the last place, and, according to the prophet, choose to be outcasts in the house of the Lord, therefore they merit to be heard by Him, for "every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii. 14). And again: "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace" (1 Peter v. 5).

But again, such as were of distinguished rank in the world must not despise their sisters who came from a poor or lowly condition into holy religion. For they ought rather more to glory in the society of their poor sisters than in the rank or riches to which they themselves were born.

They who enter into the holy companionship and common life of religion must, with all possible vigilance, beware that none of them nurture any dislike for another, even though one be gifted more than another in wealth or rank or knowledge. For, as the Apostle says: "The weak and the base things of the world, and the things that are

contemptible hath God chosen that no flesh shall glory in his sight" (1 Cor. i. 27, 29), neither the powerful in his strength, nor the wise in his wisdom, nor the rich man in his wealth. "There is no respect of persons with God" (Col. iii. 25).

For the same Lord is bountiful unto all that call upon Him. With good reason are we admonished to glory rather in the company of our poor companions than in the dignity of distinguished rank, because He who was rich in His glory made Himself poor for our sakes. He was pleased to associate not with the rich but with the poor, so that we may be drawn to render ourselves poor for His sake, since the Kingdom of Heaven is promised to the poor. It is part of the vanity of the world to take pride in wealth: to glory in poverty belongs to the state of those blessed in God's sight.

Neither shall they be elated if they have brought much wealth to the community; nor be proud of what they have bestowed upon the convent any more than if they had enjoyed it in the world.

In this and the following passages two kinds of pride are indicated. One is of a carnal nature, the other spiritual. To look down upon the poor and to boast of one's high rank are a kind of pride that is frequently met with in seculars. To feel self-complacency in deeds of virtue is spiritual pride—a form that is liable to assault those that

live in religion. Now spiritual pride is more to be feared than the carnal, for to be elated because of good deeds or virtues is like falling from a height ; and the higher the ascent of virtue the more dangerous proves the fall. Our Lord says in the Gospel : " When thou dost alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth ; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee " (Matt. vi. 3, 4). Well-doing is signified by the right hand ; and by the left the favour of the world and self-complacency. So that in these words we are counselled to hide our good works from our own vain thoughts, otherwise we shall have no reward from our Father.

Next St Augustine shows how great a vice pride is, when he says :—

For every other vice tends to make us do evil works, but pride lies lurking in ambush for good works, to destroy them.

Here it is shown that pride is the worst of all vices, because it attacks the soul through its virtues as well as through its evil habits. Pride is hateful to God and men. It is called in Holy Writ " the beginning of all sin " (Eccles. x. 15). It is the first prompting in the committing of sin ; it remains the last in the struggle against sin. Indeed when the servant of God has overcome other vices and has reached the heights of virtue, she still has to face the battle against pride, and if she do not

engage in the struggle her labour in other directions will be in vain. Whilst thus we perform our good works outwardly, let us guard our heart from vanity within, seeing that no action tainted with pride can give God pleasure. So the sacred Scripture admonishes us, saying: "With all watchfulness, keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it" (Prov. iv. 23).

What, then, does it avail to give away all freely to the poor and become poor, if the wretched soul becomes more proud by forsaking riches than by possessing them?

It avails us little to relinquish our goods unless we also relinquish ourselves. Our Lord says not "Blessed are the poor in external goods," but "Blessed are the poor in spirit—theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." In having left all things one should find an increase of humility rather than of pride. Indeed it would be better to have retained possession of them in the world than give them up to pride oneself in the cloister on the act of renunciation. As a soul is blessed in distributing her goods to the poor for God's sake—in order to become humble—so that one is full of misery that becomes proud through having done the same. Most unhappy is the one that sets out upon the road of virtue only to reach vice: who incurs penalties where she should win reward. Every proud person sinks so much the lower as she tries to exalt herself by pride, and falls all

the more deeply as she aims at lifting herself up higher.

After the instruction for the removal of these evils, the rule returns to that unity which it has already commended :—

All therefore live together in unity and concord, and honour in one another that God whose temples you have become.

We live together in unity when we have one soul in God, just as in the early Church there was one heart and one soul in God. When the rule tells us to dwell in unity it refers to our state of will : and when it adds “and in concord” it is speaking of our external duties. This is the true order of our life — to have first the same will or intention, and then outwardly a concordant method of action. The religious who intends to live in concord must first set aside all evil habits ; must not be self-willed, disorderly, or undisciplined. She must not be a cause of trouble to others. She must so balance her manner of acting and the whole tenor of her life that she may maintain concord in God with those with whom she has to live.

Now there are some who, after having forsaken the world, seek to follow their own wills, and others who by their external deeds would wish to make an appearance in the eyes of seculars. Therefore does the rule say : “All live together in unity and concord.” And we honour God in one another if

we love one another for His sake, diligently keep His commandments, and become His temple by the indwelling of His spirit within us.

We must give honour to God, and God will come to dwell in us and enlighten us by His grace.

[Another instruction on the last four points of the rule.]

Neither shall they be elated if they have brought much wealth to the community, nor be proud of what they have bestowed upon the convent any more than if they had enjoyed it in the world.

Better is it to keep one's belongings in the world than to part with them from a motive of vain-glory. For those that exalt themselves in this way are always cast down. Indeed, whosoever takes pride in the thought of her well-doing, stumbles all the more as she seems to progress, since a good deed springing from pride does not elevate, but rather weighs one down.

Blessed, then, is the soul that is able to say with the prophet: "Lord, my heart is not exalted: nor are my eyes lofty: neither have I walked in great matters, nor in wonderful things above me" (Ps. cxxx. 1).

Clearly she is a happy religious who conceals no pride in the heart nor shows it in demeanour; neither in look, nor in dress, nor in word, nor in deed, nor in any external movement. Happy is the one that "walks not in great matters"—or, in

other words, that does not reckon herself among the great either because of noble birth or influence, or because she has bestowed her wealth or rendered a service to the community. Happy she who "walks not in wonderful things above her" so as not to pose as remarkable or praiseworthy on account of the religious spirit or the holy state bestowed by God from on high. Yet seldom is any one found to be quite free from trouble in these matters. But that the servant of God may get the better of such forms of pride, she must ever cherish a lowly opinion of herself, never allow her mind to be lifted up with vain ideas, but by humility repress every such thought in accordance with the words: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things" (Eccles. iii. 20). Then must we always bear in mind with salutary fear the truth that follows:—

Every other vice tends to make us do evil works, but pride lies lurking in ambush for good works, to destroy them.

Thus covetousness and sensuality are kept alive only by wrong deeds, and so with the other vices. Pride alone lies lurking in good works to destroy them. Therefore did the Pharisee forfeit the fruit of his pious actions because he made proud boast of what he had accomplished. So they are the more foolishly vain as they feed their pride on complacency in their contempt of vanity. In like manner, too, those are foolishly vain who are

elated with the thought that they have spurned riches. Concerning these the rule continues:—

What, then, does it avail to give away all freely to the poor, and become poor, if the wretched soul becomes more proud by forsaking riches than by possessing them?

This is as much as to say plainly: Of what use is poverty with pride? Better be rich and humble than poor and proud; better a humble contrite sinner than a proud man who may otherwise be just. Therefore the true servant of God must in all things use foresight and circumspection, first, that he may do no wrong, then that he may neglect no opportunity of doing good, and finally that he may not suffer himself to be puffed up with vanity at the good he is able to perform. For only those acts of ours are truly meritorious which we always preserve by humility. Then, in truth, are we the poor of Christ if we are humble for the sake of Christ. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3).

Hence with reason is it added:—

Live therefore in concord and unity together, and honour Almighty God in one another, whose temples you have become.

For poverty and humility beget charity: charity fosters unity, and unity and concord make us the temples of God. Then truly do we honour God when we live in unity and agreement. For thus

we show that we are the disciples of Christ, holding fast to the unity that has its bond in the charity of Christ. For this reason our Lord says: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (John xiii. 35).

CHAPTER III

OF PRAYER AND FASTING

BE attentive to prayer at fixed times and appointed hours.

To occupy oneself in prayer outside the allotted time is an act of spiritual providence ; to pray at the appointed hour carries with it the merit of obedience ; to allow the time of prayer to go by unheeded is an act of negligence. Our prayer should be the more frequent as we possess a clearer knowledge of its value. Constantly and fervently must we pray, because through this means God promises us immense blessings. Indeed "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God hath prepared for them that love him." He will not have these favours become small in our estimation through too great facility in seeking and finding. Precisely because a most precious and desirable reward awaits the eager worker, our Lord encourages us with these words in the Gospel: "Ask and it shall be given you,

seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. vii. 7).

The kingdom of God is not promised to the slothful, the tepid, or the careless, but, as Holy Scripture says, it "suffereth violence, and only the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi. 12). God takes delight in the constancy and importunity of our petitions because if His benefits are great, our desires of them must not be small. There must be a proportion between the immensity of the rewards and our yearning after them. Then if God is not pleased to hear us at our first pleading, not on that account must we cease seeking and knocking, but with all the more eagerness must we persevere, and with the more persistent cry must we beseech Him who alone is our Saviour, until at last He accede to the suppliant's wish. And if any of us feel her conscience, her thoughts, or her deeds to have been sullied with the uncleanness of any vice, then she must beg the mercy of her Redeemer in constant weeping, and ask at the same time the intercession and aid of the Saints of God. If thus we persevere and keep our minds long intent upon the object of our prayer after the example of the Canaanite woman, then will the grace of our Redeemer soon come upon us, to correct all our failures, to cleanse all impurities, to calm all our troubles. For He is faithful and just in His promise to condone all our sins and purge us from all iniquity if only our souls cry out with the voice of earnest pleading.

In order that the religious may be able to pray in secret and in quiet, it is further written:—

In the oratory let nothing be done but what relates to prayer (from which the place takes its name). So that if perchance any in their free time should wish to pray there, outside the fixed hours, they may not be hindered by those who should think of engaging there in other occupation.

Our Lord cast out the buyers and sellers from the temple, saying: "My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Matt. xxi. 13), in order to teach that there should be no occupation but prayer in the house of the Lord. Every church is established only for this purpose, for it is the house of God and the gate of heaven. It is here that sinners find reconciliation, and the just, sanctification: here the divine mysteries are unfolded and heavenly sacraments handled. Wherefore Solomon said: "Lord, if thy people, being converted, shall pray to thee in this place, then hear them from heaven and forgive the sin of thy people, Israel" (2 Paralip. vi. 24).

So then we must use the utmost care that in the sanctuary nothing be done either to offend the eyes of the Divine Majesty or to distract them that would pray there. It is next pointed out what should be the manner of our prayer:—

When you pray to God in psalms and hymns let the heart ponder what the mouth utters.

Those that sing in the church must fix their

mind upon the words expressed, thus fulfilling the sentiment of the Apostle: "I will sing with the spirit, I will sing also with the understanding" (1 Cor. xiv. 15). Only thus will the constancy of our prayers prove fruitful—if we turn over in the mind what we utter with the lips. On the other hand, God does not give ear to the prayer to which even he who prays gives no attention. This lack of attention but too often occurs with us through the temptation of the evil one. He knows well the utility of prayer; he envies us the privilege of being able to address ourselves to God, and therefore stirs up a tumult of thoughts in those that are at prayer so as to lead the mind off that holy exercise and rob it of its fruit. Against his malice we must practise constancy of will, so that the more he attacks us with troubling thoughts, so much the more stoutly must the soul stand fast in the faithful observance of its whole state of life. For it conduces much to the sanctity of our prayer to restrain ourselves from unlawful deeds in every place and at every season; to chasten the hearing, as well as the tongue, from all idle talk; to train ourselves to walk ever in God's law and search deeply into His commands with all our heart. The things we are accustomed most frequently to do, to speak of, to hear about, by force of habit must needs recur again to the mind as to their natural abode.

And do not sing anything but what is ordained

to be sung; and what is not so noted is not to be sung.

It is not right that the church singing should be varied according to the ideas of different persons. It should be steadily maintained according to the written and traditional use of those that have gone before us. In the same way all other customs of the convent ought to be regulated by authority and discretion. And if aught is to be changed or newly established, this should not be hastily or lightly decided upon, nor yet merely on the opinion of two or three. But the matter should be arranged as the chief part of the chapter shall judge best, when all have been gathered together to consider it. We must know that ecclesiastical authority is always to be followed before private reasoning. For authority is ever the safeguard of humility and obedience, whereas reason not unfrequently leads to presumption. This principle is always to be regarded in a religious order if it is to shine by maturity and gravity. St Paul says of himself: "Did I use lightness . . . that there should be with me, *It is and it is not?*" (2 Cor. i. 17). For it is becoming, and especially in keeping with the religious state, to refrain from easily or lightly introducing change.

Subdue your flesh by fasting and abstinence from meat and drink, as much as your health may allow.

"The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the

spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17). But for fear that the flesh might gain the mastery, all spiritual persons must repress this lusting of the flesh by exerting the energy of the spirit. For as the flesh is controlled, the spirit is strengthened. And when the rule adds, "as much as your health may allow," it commands the use of the virtue of discretion. Indeed, all good works suffer if they be not done with discretion. So that each one must make use of abstinence to subdue the flesh only in as far as the constitution will allow. One that afflicts the body beyond measure may be said to slay a fellow-citizen; whilst another who pampers it with overmuch delicacy, supports an enemy. The flesh must therefore be so nourished that it may be able to serve: it must be so repressed that it may not rebel. In all our penance we must seek to destroy, not our body, but our vices.

And if any one of you cannot fast, still let him not take food out of meal time, unless when sick.

Gluttony is the first of the seven capital sins, a vice that may be excited sometimes by objects small and trifling. The first man was tempted not by flesh, but by an apple; Esau was tempted, not with a dish of fowl, but with a simple mess of pottage; our Saviour was tempted, not with meat, but with bread. Now there are three kinds of gluttony. One consists in partaking immoderately

of food or drink. The second is to desire too delicate a sort of meat or drink. The third is in the act of eating and drinking outside the proper times. We regard the time up to¹ Tierce as being outside the meal-time, because up to this hour it is not the custom with us to eat or drink except in case of sickness. It is allowable for the sick to take nourishment at any time. For them no rule is set down. For those that cannot fast, but yet are not to be counted as sick, we consider the hour of repast to be between Tierce and Sext, and for those that fast between None and Vespers. Thus we follow the advice of the Apostle that "all things be done decently and according to order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40). Indeed we must not only be temperate in the use of food and drink, but we must also observe the regular hours for taking our food, lest we give occasion of scandal by irregularity. It would indeed be most harmful if our life were in this respect reprehensible, seeing that it is incumbent upon us to show to others the pattern of good living.

¹ The reference to the time of the recitation of the little hours and to the meal-time has no application in modern arrangements. Originally, Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None were to be recited at the first, third, sixth, and ninth hour from sunrise, as the names indicate.

Obviously, the point that is still in force is that which concerns the abstention from food outside the regular meal-times as observed in each community.

CHAPTER IV

OF NOURISHING BOTH SOUL AND BODY

WHEN you are at table, be attentive, without noise or contention, to that which according to your custom is read, until you rise from meal; and let not your mouth alone take meat, but let your hearing at the same time receive the Word of God.

To hunger after God's Word is to desire to hear it. Many there are that hear holy reading and go empty away. They have no devout feeling towards it; they lack all taste for it, and therefore easily lose all that they have heard. The very fact of hearing in this manner is a judgment upon them. Whereas it is written: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." They shall be filled, because they have first felt hunger; for it is only by such yearning that one becomes worthy to be satiated. We must then first exercise our heart in desiring and hungering after God's Word, so that divine grace may come to pervade our whole being, to refresh us with spiritual savour and sweetness, to

charm us so that we sing with the Psalmist : " How sweet are thy words to my palate, more than honey to my mouth ! " (Ps. cxviii. 103), and " The law of thy mouth is good to me above thousands of gold and silver " (Ps. cxviii. 72).

We should endeavour to partake of spiritual food whilst we take material refreshment—thus feeding the soul as well as the body. Indeed, as the soul is of more account than the body, we ought rather to seek gratification in the food of the soul. As often as Holy Scripture is read or explained, we ought to realise that this is a spiritual food sent us from God to support the soul lest it faint by the way—sent to confirm us against our temptations and all the dangers of this world. This is the food we must unceasingly hunger after. And when it is provided it must be retained in the mind so that we can say with the prophet : " Thy words I have hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against thee " (Ps. cxviii. 11). The sacred Word is the food of life to them that thus lay it up in their hearts, for it guards them against sin and leads them on to everlasting life.

Let us hear now what the rule adds concerning the sick :—

When such persons as, from their former way of life, are weak and sickly are allowed better diet than the rest, others, who from a different state are more strong, must not be concerned thereat, nor think it unjust.

This is the same as to say : the stronger must not take it amiss when they see the infirm treated indulgently. Rather, because they are stronger they must both bear the hardship of abstinence in themselves, and in compassion cheerfully put up with the weakness of others.

Neither shall they think those more privileged for having what is not allowed to themselves, but rather be glad that they are able to do what the others cannot.

It is better to abstain than to receive more. The former belongs to virtue, the latter to infirmity. That one may well congratulate herself who feels that by God's grace she is so strong and well that the common food and drink are sufficient for her without looking for any delicacy or extra nourishment. For the less one desires and the more strictly one lives, the happier one is, because the way that leads to life is strait and narrow. So that she may well rejoice that is able to live sparingly for Christ's sake, since poverty of life kills vices, stifles concupiscence, nourishes virtue, strengthens the soul, and raises the mind to heavenly things.

And if unto those persons who have come into the convent from a more tender and delicate manner of life, there be given any food, clothing, or bedding, which to the stronger, and therefore more fortunate, is not allowed, they to whom it is not given ought to consider how much the others are come down from their worldly way of

living, although as yet they are not able to go through such austerity as those who are stronger.

Why should they make this consideration? In order that reflection may show them that it is only just that they who have come down from a higher position may receive more. Further, that recognising this to be just, they may not all wish to have what they see the few receive. For they that are capable of less are yet to be borne with. This point is set forth in the next passage :—

Neither should they take it ill and be troubled because they see such sisters more tenderly treated, for they are not thereby more honoured but rather more compassionated. A detestable disorder would arise in the convent should the rich and weak undergo all possible hardship and labour, while the poor and robust are made delicate and idle.

It is indeed most hateful if any poor person become fastidious in the place where the rich seek to make their life hard by renunciation. Yet this we may often see occur with many. For the more noble and gentle some were in the world, so much the more abjectly and severely do they live in the convent. And on the other hand, as some were the more lowly and poor before, so much the more eagerly do they afterwards look for better treatment and softness in the convent. But, as we said, it is truly hateful and wicked that the poor should seek for pleasures

where the rich make every effort by their renunciation to labour for the love of God. The former live for their appetites, the others live for the spirit. The unworthy members travel by a wide and open road towards punishment—while the others hasten by the strait and narrow way to the reward of glory.

CHAPTER V

OF CARING FOR THE SICK

AS it may be better for the sick to take less food so as not to overburden nature, so after sickness they ought to be treated in such a way that they may soon recover their strength; and this is to be observed even in regard to such as came from a humble position in the world, since sickness has brought them to the same weakness as former ill-health or delicate treatment had brought the rich.

In certain kinds of illness, extra food would be harmful rather than helpful, and then the sick have need of less food so as not to overburden nature. But when the sickness is past, they must be treated in such a way that they may recover as quickly as possible. In this convalescence of the sisters there must be no distinction of persons. The lowliest poverty must not be despised when it is a matter of the needs of our common nature. The recent illness should then be regarded as placing the poor in the position in which the wealthy are by their former manner of life. God is merciful to them who show mercy to their neighbour.

Wherefore He says: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7).

St John also says: "He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need and shall put up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (1 John iii. 17).

If, then, we would possess the charity of God we must exercise the works of mercy towards every member of the community. And in so doing, beyond all doubt we serve Him who will say to His Elect in the judgment: "I was sick and you visited me; I was hungry and you gave me to eat" (Matt. xxv. 35, 36). Then the reward will be assigned in these words: "Possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). Thus when we serve our sisters for God's sake, we establish our claim to the Kingdom of Heaven. Though our deeds of kindness are transitory, the reward remains for ever.

But when the sick have recovered their former strength, let them return to their happier condition of life.

It is a happy condition of life to be engaged in cutting away the desires of the flesh that war against the soul. It is a happy condition to practise abstinence, to chastise the body, and bring it into subjection.

For this happy state of life is the more becoming in the Servants of God in proportion

as their needs are fewer. And so let them not be held back when once they are well, by gratification in the food of which they had need, whilst in sickness, to restore them to health.

To remove sickness it is necessary to have special care of the body. But when the body has again grown strong such care must cease, lest the pleasure occasioned by the use of delicate nourishment take hold of the servants of God and make them pander to sensual appetite when they ought to be working for the welfare of the soul. Therefore the less they want, the better do they live in accordance with their state: that they give way to no gratification in eating, and allow not the vice of gluttony to destroy the virtues of the soul.

No one wins the palm in the spiritual combat who has not first overcome the incentives to sensuality by mortifying the desires of the lower appetite. And there is no rising to the actual conflict of the spiritual warfare until the enemy of gluttony or sensual appetite that is within us has been subdued. Because if we do not first break down these evils that are so near to us, fruitlessly shall we move forward to attack those that are further removed. Hence many, mistaking the order of the spiritual battle, pay no heed to the suppression of gluttony and set out upon more spiritual warfare. Not unfrequently they even achieve victories of great bravery. But

when, through the allurements of the flesh, the vice of gluttony gains sway, they lose all that they had courageously won, and, as the flesh is not restrained, through its concupiscence all other virtues perish.

As the chief cook destroyed the walls of Jerusalem,¹ so the pleasure of eating and drinking, when not repressed, destroys the virtues of the soul. The people of Israel went out of Egypt and succumbed in the desert, because they despised the manna and hankered after the flesh-pots they had left behind them. Esau forfeited the honour due to the first-born because he burned with the desire of so poor a repast as a mess of pottage. For indeed the evil is not in the food but rather in our desires. So that we may often partake of sumptuous food without any fault, whilst at other times we offend our conscience by taking simple fare. Consequently we must allow ourselves those things which the need of nature requires, and leave aside those that are suggested by the mere desire of eating.

Let those think themselves the richer who are the stronger in enduring privation.

The vices of the flesh are suppressed by courage in bearing privation, and out of the mortification of vices spring the various virtues that form the real riches of chaste souls. Whence the rule adds:—

It is better to need less than to have more.

¹ This reference is obscure.—Tr.

It is better to endure some want for God's sake than to abound in plenty. For the want that is borne for God begets humility, the source of all good. Whereas abundance produces pride, the root of all evils. Therefore that the servant of God may repress carnal will and appetite, she must at least aim at contenting herself with less food and clothing than is usually deemed necessary. Indeed we may find a helper of our good desire in the flesh that we bear externally; because whilst it possesses evil tendencies, it is also endowed with the capability of executing our good works. Therefore it is for the interior spirit to preside as a just judge between itself and the exterior, to the end that the body may always have strength enough to contribute the service due from it, without ever arrogantly setting in opposition its own evil inclination.

CHAPTER VI

OF INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR DEPORTMENT

LET not your habit be in any way remarkable, and do not affect to please by your dress but by your religious behaviour.

That holy man, St Augustine, practised what he here lays down. For it is written of him that his clothes and shoes were neither too neat nor too poor, but far from either excess and befitting his state. We also read that he said of himself: "I confess that I should be ashamed to wear a rich garment: it is not in keeping with my profession or with my teaching; it does not become these members, and these grey hairs." Hence our Lord says in the Gospel: "Behold they that are in costly apparel and live delicately are in the houses of kings" (Luke vii. 25). In the same place He speaks of such apparel as soft because it softens the soul. In the king's palace delight is taken in soft garments, but the Church of Christ glories in rough and lowly vesture. And such must be the clothing of clergy and religious that neither novelty nor pride nor vainglory may be seen in them. It is not delicate clothing but

innocence of soul that forms the adornment of the priest and the religious. Let us then adorn ourselves with spiritual ornaments, that is to say, with chastity, humility, meekness, obedience, patience, and charity. These form the clothing in which the soul will be pleasing in the sight of the Heavenly King. For this Spouse, whom we see not, expects to find in us not external but inward beauty, as it is written: "All the glory of the king's daughter is within" (Ps. xliv. 14).

Our wealth, then, and our adornment, are our virtues. And blessed is the soul to which the words of the Cantic of Canticles can be addressed: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7). Let us study, then, to give pleasure to our unseen Master, not by our dress, but by our deeds, so as to fulfil in ourselves that which the Apostle enjoins: "Be not conformed to this world: but be reformed in the newness of your mind" (Rom. xii. 2). "For though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. iv. 16). Next the rule gives instruction concerning walking, standing, and other gestures, saying:—

When you go abroad, walk together : and when you come to the place you are going to, remain together. In walking, standing, and in all your movements let there be nothing to offend the eyes of any one, but let all be done in a manner that befits your holy profession.

Holy Church, in her more perfect members, not only shines out before the world by the innate dignity of religion, but she gains beauty also by the outward splendour of virtue. And in this sense the words of Ecclesiasticus may be applied: "My flowers are the fruit of honour and riches" (Eccles. xxiv. 23). It is in accordance with the spirit of holy religion and of virtue that they who dwell together, when going abroad, should remain together. It is the advice of the Apostle, too, that "all things be done decently, and according to order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40). We can also give a spiritual meaning to this outward union. For the company of the saints is described as terrible against enemies like an army in battle array. The army, when preparing for battle, unites and ranges itself in compact order so that it be not divided or broken through by the enemy. Just so our spiritual battle line, under the command to stand or move together in perfect order, daily offers a strong front against the Evil One. And thus our unity strikes terror into our old enemy, who fears nothing more in the servants of God than this unity of concord.

But we must also take serious note of what the rule next says:—

In all your movements let there be nothing to offend the eyes of any one, but let all be done in a manner that befits your holy profession.

Our religious must live in such a manner that

they may not deservedly incur the blame of any one. It would be deplorable indeed if they, whose order requires that they exhibit to others a true pattern of holiness, should instead deserve to be reprehended by them. These words of God have application in our case: "Be ye holy because I, the Lord, your God, am holy" (Lev. xix. 2). We are bound to be holy because we have taken on ourselves the name and the garb of religion and of sanctity; because we are dedicated to the service of God, and consecrated to live before the altar of Christ, and to assist at the divine mysteries.

"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1). We may note that the Apostle does not merely tell us what we should be, but bids us live so that men may account us for what we profess to be. For it is not enough for our lives to be sinless, but our reputation must also be in accordance with our profession. Our good life is needed to satisfy our own conscience; our good name must serve for the edification of our neighbour. Hence the Apostle says again: "We must have a good testimony from those who are without" (1 Tim. iii. 7). We must so live, then, that our life may answer to our name that our profession may be carried out in deed, that whilst our congregation bears the reputation of sanctity, the tenor of our individual lives shall be holy, and as good is spoken of us we shall bear

out the truth of what is said by the witness of our good works.

Now we live up to the spirit of holy religion when by discipline we master all unlawful tendencies, when we make it our study to curb our senses and our members from inclining to concupiscence or levity, so that our whole deportment be always simple and humble. According to this spirit, the eye must not fix its gaze on aught that the soul may not desire without sin. The hearing must be pure and governed by discretion, deaf to all things vain and useless, ready to take in with delight the knowledge that is of God. Our speech must be seasoned with the salt of wisdom—to condemn all that is unprofitable or evil, to give utterance only to what is good and useful. There must be purity in our heart and chastity in our looks. Gravity must appear as we walk about, and recollection whilst we are standing. Our movements must all be accompanied with an air of seriousness, and even our habit must bespeak the spirit of holy religion. And all this to the end that “in all your movements there be nothing to offend the eyes of any one, but that all be done in a manner that befits your holy profession.”

If your eyes light upon men, let them not be fixed upon them. For you are not forbidden to see men: but to take particular notice of, and to desire to be noticed by them, is sinful.

Our Lord says in the Gospel: “Whosoever shall

look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). As concupiscence is excited by unlawful looks, and purity of mind is thus offended, it is needful for the servant of God to keep a guard over the sight lest she displease God through concupiscence and uncleanness of heart. Holy David succumbed to evil desire and committed a grave sin because he allowed his eyes to gaze upon a woman. If so great a man fell through want of custody of the eyes, we, that are a long way off from his holiness, have reason to tremble at the danger of so serious a downfall. We should then take for ourselves a resolution like that of Blessed Job: "I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as look upon a virgin" (Job xxxi. 1). The holy man understood clearly that the soul can be tainted through bodily sight, and therefore he made a covenant with his eyes never to gaze upon anything that could excite wrong desires. Indeed no vice can be withstood except we persistently guard ourselves against the causes and occasions of it. On this account Lot was bidden, as he fled from Sodom, not to look back nor to tarry anywhere in the neighbouring country, but to hasten to place himself in safety on the mountain. For if we would effectively escape the incentives to vice we must alienate ourselves from the very sight and suggestion of them. We must mount to the heights of virtue without ever stopping if we would always

be as secure from danger as we now feel ourselves to be in our present state of virtue and separation from the occasion of sin.

The rule goes on to point out how the sight may be the cause of exciting concupiscence, in these words:—

For criminal desire may arise and increase, not from a hidden internal affection alone, but also from affections and unguarded looks together.

That is to say, the hidden act of the will within is not the only source of concupiscence, but it may also be caused by the external glance. For if Holy David had not looked unchastely he would not have fallen into so serious a carnal offence. Hence by the prophet it is said: "Death is come up through our windows" (Jer. ix. 21). The death of the soul is concupiscence: the interior house is the mind: the windows of this house are the five senses of the body. Death, therefore, comes up through the window and enters the house where the evil of concupiscence effects a way through our senses into the inner part of the mind. Wherefore, lest the inner life should perish through the workings of the sensual appetite, we must guard the windows of our house with much diligence. Thus we shall the more easily be able to calm that outward desire, as we are the more cautious not to allow any entrance to stand open to evil.

The next passage of the rule must fill us with salutary fear :—

Do not say that your souls are chaste if the eyes are unchaste, for a wanton eye is the messenger of a wanton heart.

The exterior members often indicate what is lurking deep within the soul, and the disposition of the mind may frequently be known from that of the body. A fault is not so grievous whilst it is hidden, but it takes on a greater degree of guilt when it begins to appear openly. It must be understood that impurity may be either in the flesh or in the spirit. It exists in the spirit when it consists only of illicit pleasure in thoughts. It is carnal when there is some corresponding bodily action. And this may occur in various ways. Sight, hearing, touch, imagination, speech, and action, may be the fuel whereby the ardour of sinful pleasure is fed and increased, and thereupon the soul is separated from God, chastity departs from its actions, and sensuality gets possession of the mind. Wherefore the rule continues :—

And when impure hearts discover their inclinations by the eye to each other, and concupiscence moves them to take pleasure in sinful desires, though the tongue be silent and the body remain chaste, yet the virtue of chastity departs from them.

Chastity departs when gross, sensual pleasure is kindled by mutual glances. Though the body be not touched by impurity, the uncleanness is

committed by sight, passion, imagination, and delectation, and by each of these as by so many grades the guilt increases. A slight thought may beget pleasure; pleasure leads on to consent; consent is followed by deed; deeds form a habit, and habit becomes necessity. The Apostle, St Paul, tells us that there is a law of sin in our members. This law is the habit that is formed by sinning, from which we cannot liberate ourselves when we would, because we are held in the bonds of necessity. The best way, then, is to correct a fault as soon as it shows itself. For if there be any dallying with it, it soon passes to grievous sin, and then might be applied the words of the Psalmist: "They have lengthened their iniquity. The Lord who is just will cut the necks of sinners" (Ps. cxxviii. 3, 4).

Whosoever therefore fixes her eyes upon a man and seeks to be beheld by him, must not imagine she is not seen by others; she is certainly seen, and even by those she least suspects.

This we often observe in regard to those who would keep their faults hidden. Whilst they think they give way to their passions only in secret, and use all care that these passions be not known, they often unwittingly betray themselves, and the faults which are imagined to be secret are made manifest to others.

But suppose she is not seen by any creature, what can she do to hide her fault from the sight

of Him from whom nothing can be concealed? Can she think that He sees it not because He considers it with as much patience as wisdom?

We must always fear the presence of the heavenly Judge when we are being led to sin in thought, or word, or deed. For although our transgressions may not appear sometimes before men, they are nevertheless all open and bare to His eyes. This thought should restrain us from falling, seeing that nothing shall go unpunished in His judgment. Against the incentives of vice we should set the remembrance of the torments of hell, and against the transitory sweetness that allures us, the anguish of eternal fires. Foolish, indeed, is the soul that, to remain a slave to sensuality for a little while and to feed her low desires on the most paltry pleasures, both forfeits the bliss of heaven and incurs everlasting loss.

Let the religious then fear His displeasure and not harbour the least desire of pleasing man in evil. Let her recall that He sees all things, lest she desire any other to look wrongly upon her. For this fear of Him is recommended to us in this matter where it is written: "He who fixes his eye is an abomination to the Lord."

From these words it is plain that if the eyes be fixed upon those of the other sex, we render ourselves hateful in the sight of God, whom alone it is our duty to please. He, from whom we should have received reward, will mete out to us chastise-

ment instead. Wherefore, if divine love fails to release us from our sins, fear must restrain us. And if the joys of heaven do not attract us, then let the thought of unending torments deter us. So one begins to break away from evil when one fears to give displeasure to his Maker.

If any one asks, how shall I attain to this fear of God? I answer: If you will fear God, call to mind that He sees all things. If an evil conscience seduces you, think that God looks down upon you. Whatever wrong there is in you, remember that God is a witness of it all. Whatever we have done or spoken or turned over in our minds, let us always realise that the eyes of God are upon us. Let us ever fear to give Him any displeasure. This is the way of justice, the beginning of wisdom, as it is written: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Eccles. i. 16).

The rule continues:—

Whenever, therefore, you are together in the church or elsewhere in the presence of men be very careful to help one another to guard modesty and religious chastity.

Excellent, indeed, and most highly commended in the divinely inspired writings, is this virtue of chastity. Its value is spiritual and heavenly. It lifts us up from the earth, associates us with the angels, unites us to God, and from earthly beings it transforms us into citizens of heaven, spiritualising all our carnal nature. Chastity is a

virtue that quite transcends human nature: it is divine rather than human virtue that makes the creature chaste and pure.

The result of chastity is that our heavenly Spouse becomes enamoured of us through its beauty. No soul can please God, on the other hand, unless it be chaste and stainless, for whilst it is a slave to impurity and sensuality it is hateful and rejected of God. Chastity has a charm in the sight of both God and man. Hence the old enemy of our race envies us the possession of this virtue and never ceases his assaults against it. Many a one does this instigator of all uncleanness and impurity corrupt, for he spares none, even the cleric of the sanctuary or the monk in his solitude, and, sad to say, he sometimes gets the better of those who were well known for their religion and virtue.

We see, then, how needful it is to use all vigilance to assist one another to preserve this virtue. Losing this, we lose all that we have, and ourselves as well: we lose God, we lose our souls, and all that we are. But we live together in order that we may protect one another, correct one another, and advise one another, so that when one would prove to be weak by herself, another may come to her aid.

But since with all our efforts our real defence is from God, the rule adds:—

For God, who dwells within you, will thus, by each other's help, guard and preserve you.

Our own defence is of little avail if divine help be not at hand. So it is written: "Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. cxxvi. 1). It must be understood that none can preserve chastity for self or for others except through God. If He dwell within us we shall be able to accomplish through Him what we could never do alone. Let it therefore be our desire that He dwell in us, and we in Him, that we may ever be chaste and holy through Him who, being God, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE CORRECTION OF OUR NEIGHBOUR

IF you perceive in any of your companions this liberty of sight of which I speak, prudently admonish her of it, to the end that a speedy correction may hinder her from going on in what she had begun. But if after the admonishment she does the same again, though on another day, whosoever finds it out must not fail to make it known and declare the person as one wounded, that she may be healed. The fault, however, must first be made evident to a second or third person, that she may be convicted by the testimony of two or three witnesses and corrected with due severity.

This instruction agrees with the counsel both of the Apostle and of the Gospel. St Paul says: "Brethren, and if a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. vi. 1). And our Saviour says: "But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the

mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand" (Matt. xviii. 15, 16).

Extreme care must be taken in examining and correcting faults, because if we do not amend them now we shall suffer loss in the future, according to the Apostle's words: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). It is then far better to correct one's life now than to run the risk of perishing at the end.

The one who is glad to be corrected is truly wise. Wherefore it is written: "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Prov. ix. 8). The foolish man is angered when corrected. And what does the Apostle say to his disciple? "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. iv. 2).

The preaching "in season" is to be understood as referring to those that willingly listen to the words of instruction, whilst the expression "out of season" refers to them that hear it only against their will. Similarly those that correct the faults of others must sometimes be importunate, and speak "out of season." But this importunity arises not from anger but charity. And it often occurs that the person who resents a reprimand, later on comes to see with how much charity the correction was made, and then she studies to profit by the admonition and amend her conduct.

Nor ought you to think it wrong when you make known such faults; for truly you would not be blameless yourselves if, by your silence, you permitted your sister to be lost, whom

you might have corrected by discovering her fault. For if one of your sisters had a wound in her body which she would willingly keep secret fearing an operation, would it not be cruelty in you to conceal it, and an act of charity to make it known? With how much more reason, then, ought you to manifest her ill-behaviour, lest corruption enter her heart!

If it would be cruel to keep back the knowledge of a sister's bodily ailment, it would be much more so not to point out a wound that exists in the soul. Indeed to conceal it would be to become answerable for the death of that soul, since by silence it was allowed to perish. Then both would be condemned, one for the commission of the sin, the other for passing it over in silence. Again, if it is cruelty not to disclose a fault, on the other hand it is an act of mercy not to allow it to remain hidden. And no greater act of mercy can be performed than to restore life to one in danger of perishing. Great will be the reward that is earned by such a helper from the Almighty who has said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7).

St James says: "He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (St James v. 20).

Now the rule that should be observed in disclosing faults is laid down in the next portion of the rule:—

But before it be made known to others who are to convict her, in case she denies the fault, it should first be declared to the superior, when the person admonished has neglected to amend, that so, by a secret correction, she may be reformed and the fault kept from the knowledge of others.

When a fault has been committed in secret, it is to be corrected by any who may come to the knowledge of it. Then if the guilty one should neglect the admonition, the fault is to be declared to the superior, that she may privately correct the sister, so that if the wrong can be remedied in private it may not be made known to all. If then the sister denies the charge, witnesses should be called, and being convicted by them, she should be more severely punished, as is laid down in the following words of the rule:—

If she denies the accusation, then let witnesses be brought that she may be convicted by two or three. The charge being proved against her, she must undergo the corrective penalty according to the judgment of the superior, or priest, or bishop to whom it belongs to decide.

If one will not be corrected by easy chastisement she must be more severely punished—as it is necessary to have recourse to a painful operation when milder treatment does not suffice to cure a disease. A transgressor must be reprimanded publicly, if she refuses to be corrected

in private—so that the wound that cannot be healed by simpler means must be treated by the more painful method of disclosure.

But public offences are not to be dealt with in a private way. Open defaulters must be rebuked openly, that whilst they are cured by public censure, others, that might imitate this bad example, may be corrected at the same time. The offender that has refused secret admonition, being openly convicted, shall submit to the appointed punishment.

If she refuses to submit, or will not leave of her own accord, she shall be expelled from the convent. Nor is this cruelty, but charity, lest the contagion should infect and ruin many.

It is preferable that one be condemned for the safety of many than that many live in danger through the bad influence of one. Hence our Lord says in the Gospel: "If thy right eye scandalise thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand scandalise thee, cut it off and cast it from thee" (St Matt. v. 29, 30). By the right eye or right hand we may understand any friend intimately connected with our life. For in the needs of life the eye is of great service, even as the hand that administers to us. Any one, therefore, that contributes to our spiritual welfare is as the right eye

or right hand. A friend that can assist us to this degree must yet be severed from the body, that is, from the community, if at the same time she be an occasion of scandal to others in the service of God. For it is better to forego the pleasant or useful company of one person, than through that one to expose the whole body to danger.

And this which I have said concerning correction of fixing the eyes is to be faithfully and diligently observed in detecting, forbidding, declaring, convicting, and punishing other offences, with love of the persons and detestation of the offences.

So the same Holy Doctor, St Augustine, has said in another place: We must so love men that we have no consideration for their errors. It is one matter to love them and another to hate their errors.

There may be found some who rebuke the failings of their neighbours rather in the bitterness of hatred than out of charity, and not so much with a view to correct them as to give vent to the bad feeling they have in their hearts. This is certainly not according to God's will, as it is prompted by revenge rather than by a love of discipline. Let us all beware that we do not reprimand our sisters in anger or rancour, but always in mildness and charity. And if at times, when the fault is serious, we cannot avoid harshness in our words, let gentleness always remain in our hearts, according as the Apostle commands :

"You that are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness"; and he adds this good reason: "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). Look then into yourself as well, when you have to correct another and acknowledge that you also are a sinner and subject to frailty, lest you also be grievously tempted, if your admonition proceeds more from irritation than from compassion. Let the correction be prompted by love for the persons and hatred of all vices. And let this love of the neighbour and hatred of all that is wrong always be maintained, so that we may be severe with error but at the same time have a tender compassion for the weakness of human nature.

But if any one should have gone so far in evil as to receive letters or little presents from any one in secret, provided she confess it of her own accord, let her be spared, and prayer made for her.

A sister who receives anything in secret is considered to have gone far in evil, because this is an infringement of an important rule of our state of life. One may well be thought to incur a serious danger who wilfully breaks a rule so universally binding throughout the religious state. If the holy prophet Eliseus had not considered it a grievous fault on the part of his disciple, Giezi, to take a reward secretly from Naaman, the Syrian, he would not have brought upon him the dreadful infliction of leprosy. The example

shows us that one who commits a like offence amongst us deserves severe punishment. Nevertheless, if a sister should offend in this manner and acknowledge her fall of her own accord, she is to be spared, and prayer is to be made for her. For the sin at once becomes less serious when it is disclosed by voluntary and humble confession. So David exclaims: "I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin" (Ps. xxxi. 5).

But if she be taken in the fault and convicted, then shall she be severely punished, according to the judgment of the superior, or priest, or bishop.

The greater the fault, the heavier must be the penalty, and it must be regarded as a grievous matter to hide the wrong that has been done. St Jerome has these words concerning the secret reception of letters and small presents:—"Chaste and holy love is not increased by the exchange of letters, kerchiefs, and other little keepsakes; whoever finds pleasure in such things is seduced by vanity, and the more delight a soul takes in these lower satisfactions, so much the more is it estranged from those of a nobler kind."

Very serious evils may be occasioned by such an irregularity. The religious who is careful to shun all sins does not merely aim at avoiding things that are decidedly bad in themselves, but

everything besides that would give occasion to any wrong action, or to even a suspicion. And we, whom it behoves to live holily and to give good example to others, must shun all that can bring the slightest suspicion upon us.

CHAPTER VIII

OF CARE IN THE CUSTODY OF THE COMMON GOODS

YOUR clothes shall be kept in a fixed place under the custody of one or two persons, or of as many as may be sufficient to look well to them and preserve them from the moths; and as you all receive food out of one common cellary, so you shall all receive clothes out of one common wardrobe.

There would seem to be two good reasons for prescribing that the clothing should be kept in the charge of one or more persons:—

Firstly, lest through want of attention they should be destroyed by the moths.

Secondly, a sister might come to think that the clothes she uses are her own property, if she kept them in a place apart for herself.

The following words of the rule agree with this idea:—

Moreover, as far as possible, you must not be particular about what is given you to wear

at different seasons, whether you receive what you left off or what another has worn before, provided what is necessary for you is not refused.

The phrase "as far as possible" leaves it to be inferred that if any one should find it hard to carry out this point of the rule, the garments she had left off may be given to her again. Still, it indicates a greater degree of virtue to have attained so thorough a contempt of self as to be satisfied so long as there is forthcoming all that the body needs. "Having food," as the Apostle says, "and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content" (1 Tim. vi. 8). St Paul does not speak of how much or of what kind, but requires only what is of necessity—a lesson to the imperfect that they often make demands from desire of comfort rather than from need. Our Holy Father, St Augustine, says elsewhere on this matter: "Human nature can content itself with little, but habit increases its needs, and so sensuality leads the will to require more."

If we loved God perfectly, and had altogether renounced carnal desires, we could dispense with many superfluous things that we now look upon as really necessary. Let us then try to love God with all our heart, so as to be led for love of Him to content ourselves with necessities and to set aside the superfluous. Then, provided that which is of real necessity is not denied us, we should not look for what is over and above. Charity seeks not her

own: sets the common interests first; makes us humble in the house of God. If the religious possesses this charity in a high degree, she will know how to be sparing even in things that are necessary.

But if hereupon contentions or murmurings arise among you, or any one should complain that she has received worse than she had before, or thinks it hard not to be so well clothed as some other sister, you at once see how much you want of the interior holy clothing of the soul, who thus contend about bodily raiment.

The clothing of the soul is holiness through the grace of God. This is bestowed upon us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, through whom we possess also peace, charity, goodness, humility, patience, concord, meekness, and the like. These form our interior store of riches, to which we are always adding by good deeds and the practice of virtues. But if we are in the habit of bickering, murmuring, or quarrelling, we deprive ourselves of these good things, since virtues cannot exist with their contraries. "A little leaven corrupteth the whole lump" (Gal. v. 9). So each one must examine herself and carefully consider how much is wanting to her, if she indulge in these faults. Let her think what a loss she sustains if she forfeits these elements of true blessedness for the sake of matters of so little moment.

We must then be warned against all strife and

contention. These are the promptings of the flesh, and "they who do such things," says the Apostle, "shall not obtain the Kingdom of God" (Gal. v. 21). St Paul also gives us this admonition: "Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vainglory: but in humility let each esteem others better than themselves. Each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's" (Phil. ii. 3, 4).

Here are two exercises that avail much to stifle all contention and to promote concord:—(1) To think ourselves inferior to all; and (2) to set more importance on the things of our neighbour than on our own. Humility and charity, as thus recommended, not only go well together themselves, but have the virtue of uniting interests that threaten to cause dispute and discord.

What has been said applies to the more perfect. In the next passage St Augustine modifies his command a little for the less advanced religious.

However, though in consideration of your frailty, you receive the same which you had worn before, yet what you leave off shall be delivered up into the common wardrobe, under the custody of the persons appointed thereunto.

Though an object has been allotted to our personal use, we shall understand, when it is put into the common store, that, in reality, it is not our own, but belongs to the community.

This is to be observed to the end that

nobody may work for herself what belongs to her clothing, bedding, or other things of the sort. But let all work be done in common, with greater care and diligence and cheerfulness than if you worked for yourselves only.

St Augustine then quotes and explains a saying of the Apostle:—

For it is written of charity that “she seeketh not her own” (1 Cor. xiii. 5), which gives us to understand that charity prefers the common good to private convenience, and not private advantage to the common good.

St Augustine indicates the reason why no one should work privately for herself, but in common, and with greater care, diligence, and cheerfulness than if the work were only for personal gain. The reason is because charity does not “seek her own,” but prefers the common good to private convenience. As the charity of Christ did not allow Him to work for Himself, neither should any of us do so; as the charity of Christ set the good of others before His own convenience, so we also should show more care, diligence, and cheerfulness in working for the community than for ourselves. The fruit of charity is worth more than the product of any labour of ours: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

Wherefore the more you give attention to the common good rather than your own, so much the more you may know you advance

in perfection: that charity which always remains may shine forth in all the circumstances of passing necessity.

The passing needs of life must be met with temporal things, with temporal attentions, but, in all and above all, charity must shine forth, since without it no one can please God. In all that we do, charity, the mother of all virtues and the root of all spiritual good, must appear. The practice of charity constitutes that higher way of approaching Heaven of which the Apostle, St Paul, speaks: "I show unto you a yet more excellent way" (1 Cor. xii. 31). Whosoever, for God's sake, contemns this world's goods, desires to keep nothing for self, and places all at the disposal of the community, such a one makes great progress in this charity. She proceeds along a truly exalted way, who treads underfoot earthly advantages, and is raised by thought and desire towards heavenly rewards.

Now this charity consists of the love of God and of our neighbour.

As regards the love of God — it must have within us a threefold expression, so that nothing remains in us that is not given over to God. We are commanded first to love God *with all our heart*. This means that we must refer all our thoughts to God. We must love Him *with our whole mind*; and this we do when we direct our reason, with which we judge and understand, to the service of God. Then we are bidden to love

God *with our whole soul*; that is, we must make all the affections of our soul tend to Him.

To carry out the love of our neighbour we must observe two maxims:—

First: "See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another" (Tobias iv. 16).

Second: "All things, therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them" (Matt. vii. 12).

Out of this twofold love of our neighbour spring all those virtues that inspire us to seek what is to our benefit, and make us shun what is to our hurt. Observing these two directions, we shall at the same time procure for our neighbour all the advantages we can, and guard against any malice towards him. In this way charity will ever shine forth in all the circumstances of passing necessity. For whatever we do or say must in some manner regard the love of God or our neighbour, and thus in all our conduct our chief intention shall be grounded in charity.

"On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 40).

If any persons give their daughters, relations, or friends in the convent garments or any other needful articles, they shall not be received secretly; but it shall ever be in the power of the superior to put them into the common stock, thence to give them out when they are wanted.

At no time in our life is it allowed to receive

or retain any object secretly. But everything must be handed over to the superior, who is free to assign it to those that need it. In this way covetousness is totally destroyed from our midst, and all superfluous possessions are given up. Hereby charity is promoted and holy poverty observed, and whilst the soul is not allowed to attach itself to any earthly goods, it can freely direct its aspirations towards the things of heaven.

But there are some who become very much upset if they are not allowed to retain what has been bestowed upon them by their friends. They value their little presents and find a certain pleasure in keeping these little objects to themselves. And then it may happen that their attachment to these small and trivial things becomes an occasion of disturbing the peace of the community. There is no doubt that the tempter avails himself of such an opportunity. This cunning enemy of ours knows the inclinations and character of us all. He sees our affections and he plies his arts where he sees that he is most likely to prevail. He minds not whether his deception is in matters trivial or important, so long as he is able to disturb fraternal charity. We must be cautious and vigilant against this insidious foe, and at all times beware of his snares. We must trample underfoot with generous resolution all those earthly things that he can make use of to

deceive us that we may sing with the Psalmist : "The snare is broken and we are delivered" (Ps. cxxiii. 7). As there is danger of some being caught in this snare of the Evil One, the rule adds :—

And if any one hides what is given to her, she shall be corrected with such punishment as belongs to theft.

As the Apostle says, those that steal and are unjust shall not possess the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi.)—for theft is a grievous sin, expressly forbidden in God's law : "Thou shalt not commit adultery ; thou shalt not steal ; thou shalt not bear false witness" (Exod. xx. 14, 15, 16). As, then, theft is ranked among the greater sins in God's law and in the canons of the Church, it is to be judged in the same way as other prohibitions of the ten commandments—as adultery, as murder, as false witness. The religious who conceals what she has received is like Judas the traitor. He was a thief and a robber, and having charge of the purse and the money that belonged to our Lord, he concealed it, and then made away with it. He was overcome by such a degree of covetousness and avarice that the devil could put it in his heart to betray and sell his Master. But just where he sought gain he found death. "*Dum sitit lucrum pervenit ad laqueum.*" Such is the result of avarice. Let the sisters then guard against coveting gain in any material form, lest

in this spirit they be tempted to conceal things, and under the suggestion of the devil commit some grave fault that might incur the penalty of death and everlasting privation in the just judgment of Almighty God.

CHAPTER IX

OF WASHING THE CLOTHES, AND OF BATHS

YOUR clothes shall be washed, as regulated by the superior—either by yourselves or others—so that too great a desire of clean clothes defile not inwardly your souls.

St Augustine gives the reason why the washing of the clothes is to be regulated by the superior. It is that no one shall contract the inward stain of sin by an inordinate desire regarding their clothing. If one is prompted by vainglory to effect an extreme cleanliness externally, by this very motive he stains his soul internally. So it is incumbent upon superiors to see that their subjects do not commit faults by studying excessive neatness of their clothes. For it is not so much cleanliness of dress as spotlessness of life that must adorn the religious. So the Apostle admonishes us: "Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind" (Rom. xii. 2). For those that cultivate an appearance in keeping with the ideas of the world, usually fail to give attention to

the beauty of the interior life: the more the outward appearance is studied, the less thought is given to the state of the soul. The true spiritual neatness that God looks for in us is indicated in these words: "Wash yourselves, be clean: take away the evil of your devices from my eyes" (Isaias i. 16). Our Lord said not: "Blessed are the clean of body," but "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8).

But on the other hand, lest any should imagine that all care of the body is to be neglected, the rule says:—

Baths, when needed, are by no means to be denied. But let them be arranged without murmuring and by the advice of the physician. And although any one should not be willing, yet when the superior commands, she shall do what is required for her health. On the other hand, if she desires it, when perhaps it is not expedient, let not her will therein be fulfilled.

This direction coincides with that of the Apostle, who forbides that care of the body that is suggested by sensuality, not that which is really necessary. And there is a great difference between the two. What is necessary is also useful; what is according to sensual desire merely, is harmful. Some have been known to maintain that bodily medicine should not be known amongst religious. But if they considered, they would have to admit that our food and drink and clothing and all material things used for the needs of the body

are but so many forms of medicine and serve the same purpose.

Let baths be arranged without murmuring, and according to the advice of the physician.

This is prescribed with good reason.

Where the bath is necessary one who is unwilling must be obliged to make use of it. When it is only a matter of pleasure—the desire must be restrained. In all such matters it is need and not pleasure that is to be considered. For sometimes, even when harmful, that which gives satisfaction is thought to do good. And here we see the reason why we must not follow the promptings of every desire, namely, because we often deceive ourselves and believe that we shall benefit by what is pleasing to us. Sensuality often deceives in this way. It declares to be good for us what is often most evil and pernicious. Here again we see why the Sacred Scripture so strongly condemns love of comfort and the pleasures experienced in the flesh. These lead to death more quickly than might be suspected.

For sometimes one thinks that what is agreeable is good for health, whereas it may be hurtful.

According to the advice of St Paul, we must refrain from carnal desires that war against the soul, because the flesh lusteth against the spirit. By the discipline of the will we must repress the

rebellion of the flesh. Some give themselves up to excessive rigour, whilst others indulge the ease of the flesh. The former, ardently longing for the spiritual life, often end by disabling the body whilst attacking their faults. But we must understand that if virtue be not regulated it is turned by excess into vice. Those that wish to live according to the flesh, make it their one aim to look after the body and gratify their desires. It is for us to moderate these two excesses. Those inclined to be like the first mentioned must be made to do what is necessary for their good. The others must be prevented from following out their carnal desires. The health of the body must be sustained in order to serve God, but at the same time sensuality must be kept under control. As the rule has spoken of sickness that is apparent, it treats now of that which might escape notice.

If any one has any secret pain or complaint, and declares it, she, the servant of God, shall be believed without mistrust.

It is but right to believe at once those whose good life and conduct prove them to be the servants of God. We can detect truth or falsehood from the life of a person better than from that person's words only. "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. vii. 20).

They that serve God are not given to deceit or duplicity: they are not to be reckoned with

those that, in heart as with their lips, speak what is false. The servants of God are the same in heart as they declare themselves to be by their word. A good life always gives weight to what is said; whereas an evil life makes even the truth appear doubtful. They, then, that beyond doubt are good and virtuous, must be believed without mistrust.

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If the infirmity be hidden, the patient is to be believed without mistrust. The servant of God fears to offend God in word as well as in deed. We should all strive to live so that whatever we say may be believed without any hesitation. Our life ought to be the recommendation of our word; our virtues should bear testimony to our truthfulness. As our Saviour says of Himself: "If you will not believe me, believe the works" (St John x. 38); and again, "The works that I do, they give testimony of me" (*Ibid.* 25). Some persons are not believed even when they speak the truth; because they are evil, or are suspected of being so. If our lives are above suspicion, our words will be taken at once for true. The less virtuous a person is, the less credit is given to what he says: the more religious one is, the greater faith is placed in his word. As the sick person sometimes experiences a desire for something that is contrary to the requirements of the illness, the rule says:—

And if it be uncertain whether what the sick

person desires be good for her, let the physician be consulted.

The words of the sick are to be believed, but their wishes are not necessarily to be granted at once, because unlawful desires may tempt them. Therefore it is prescribed that the physician be consulted. He is able to remove the doubt and make the matter certain. Nor is it strange that the rule bids us seek the advice of the doctor, since we read that St Paul gave advice as to the use of medicine. In his epistle to his disciple, Timothy, he says: "Use a little wine for the stomach's sake and thy frequent infirmities" (1 Tim. v. 23). So the prudent master moderates the abstinence of his disciple, lest, overcome by continued suffering, he should be rendered too weak to devote himself to his work of preaching. For, though it was well that St Timothy should reap the fruit of patience from his afflictions, nevertheless the Apostle foresaw that it was of greater utility that he should gain more strength by the use of medicine, in order to win more souls to God. So, of several good objects, the most useful should always be aimed at. Relying on this authority, then, we may say that it is our duty to seek medicines for the ills of the body, in order that we may be able to produce fruit in God's service.

But if it be judged necessary that such persons should go to the baths or elsewhere, they shall not go less than two or three together.

"For we forecast what may be good," says the Apostle, "not only before God, but also before men" (2 Cor. viii. 21).

A good conscience suffices for ourselves, but our good reputation must also go abroad for the sake of others. They that rely on their own conscience and neglect what people think of them are unjust to their neighbours, especially if they be in such a position as are we religious, to each of whom the words of St Paul may be addressed: "In all things show thyself an example of good works" (Tit. ii. 7); or, as he says again: "We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. iv. 9).

Those that esteem us look for the justification of their esteem in our lives; those that are opposed to us take hold of every pretext to speak ill of us. Between the two, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must guard our life and good name that we may constrain even our calumniators to speak well of us. So, then, two or three must go out together both for company and for the preservation of our good name. Solomon said: "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up. If two lie together, they shall warm one another" (Eccl. iv. 10, 11). It is wisely added:—

They shall go with whom the superior appoints.

In this way the superior consults the safety of

the persons over whom she is placed, and on the other hand, the subject practises obedience.

The care of the sick, who either are recovering or suffering under any infirmity, even though it be fever, shall be committed to some one, who shall ask for whatever she sees to be necessary for the sick.

A sister must be chosen, animated by the fear of God, to exercise the greatest care for the sick. She must make it her study to provide what is necessary for them, and attend upon them with the same consideration and affection as if she waited upon our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For He will say in the judgment: "I was sick and you visited me. . . . Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. xxv. 36, 40).

In this way the stronger are to bear the weakness of the suffering, and fulfil the precept of divine charity as the Apostle declares: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). This law of Christ is Love, and the office of love is to bear one another's burdens. As different infirmities afflict now one and now another of us, we bear these burdens mutually for one another, and there is no truer mark of real friendship than this mutual support. Those that are ill must bear in mind that it is for the love of God that they are nursed. They must use all possible care not to cause pain by their impatience, nor to overtax the sisters that

tend them by unnecessary calls upon them. At the same time let them remember to give thanks to God, so that the sickness, as designed by divine Providence, may effect the cleansing of the soul, and in no way become the source of new faults.

And such as are officers of the cellary, of the wardrobe, or of the library, must serve their sisters without murmuring.

The sisters entrusted with these offices are to discharge them with such charity as neither to complain themselves, nor cause others to murmur. We may recall, on the authority of St Gregory, that it is a serious fault to give way to murmuring. "No one who murmurs obtains the Kingdom of Heaven," he says, "and no one who possesses it ever can murmur." The Wise Man says also: "The heart of a fool is as a wheel of a cart loaded with hay" (Eccles. xxxiii. 5), it creaks continually beneath its burden. So do those members of the community who, burdened with their unmortified desires, never cease their complaints. "Neither do you murmur," says St Paul, "as some of them murmured, and perished by the serpents" (1 Cor. x. 10). They were destroyed by the poison of the serpents as they themselves had the poison of Satan in their murmuring tongues. The tongue, according to St James, "is an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison" (James iii. 8). We must then be careful not to murmur and perish by this deadly poison of Satan.

Books shall be asked for at a certain hour every day, and whosoever shall ask for them out of the time appointed shall not have them.

The rule prescribes above, the attention to prayer at the appointed times. We must then observe well the times at which we ought to pray and those at which we ought to read.

Then, regarding our work, the rule says that no one must work for herself, but that all is to be done in common. The rule treats separately of those things, all of which are necessary for the welfare of our spiritual life, namely, prayer, because it purifies us; reading, because it instructs; work, because it is a source of happiness. The Psalmist says: "Thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands: blessed art thou and it shall be well with thee" (Ps. cxxvii. 2).

The frequent use of books is recommended by the regulation that books may be asked for every day. The servant of God ought to read much. For the reading of the Divine Word is most beneficial, seeing that our books will tell us what we should guard against, how we should occupy ourselves, and whither we are tending. "Thy word," the Psalmist says, "is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths" (Ps. cxviii. 105). For reading gives light to the mind and to the judgment; prepares us for prayer and work, and disposes us for all the exercises both of the active and contemplative life. Blessed is the man "that shall meditate on the law of the

Lord day and night" (Ps. i. 2). These, then, are the weapons we have to wield against the devil: prayer, reading, and work. These are the means of our sanctification, and consequently of attaining eternal happiness. By these means we shall repress our passions and find food for all virtues.

When we cease reading we must turn our attention at once to manual occupation, because idleness is very harmful to the soul, and if our enemy should discover any one unemployed in reading or work, he easily succeeds in leading such a one into evil. Your reading will teach how you should live in holiness yourselves and how you are to teach others. By your work and bodily exercise you will destroy in you what serves as food to the passions. You will provide for your own wants, and will find something to bestow upon them that suffer want.

But as for clothing and shoes, when any one has immediate need thereof, those who have them in keeping shall not delay to give them to those who ask.

We have here a similar instruction to the above, "to serve the sisters without complaint." Those in charge of the community's goods cannot put off the distribution of necessities without being an occasion of sin to their sisters by causing them to murmur and complain. So that they must set great importance on attending to their sisters for God's sake, and in giving out the necessary objects

at convenient times. They must discharge this duty without grumbling, without any ill-feeling, without delay, but rather in a ready and cheerful spirit—for “God loveth the cheerful giver.” Let them see that the members of the community are well provided with what they require, according to the custom of our congregation and according to the means of the community.

In this way shall those that serve the others have greater merit before God. In the clothing and shoes of the religious there should be a moderation becoming their state. They must not be costly or too elegant, nor yet too mean and poor. They should not be made too stylishly, but at the same time not carelessly. In a word, let the object be always to provide clothing that is in keeping with the religious simplicity of our state.

It must also be remarked that the members of the community are not to ask for what they need with impatience, nor must they expect to be provided with things that do not become their state of life. Anything that, as religious, they ought not to have, becomes a source of evil to them. Let them bear in mind that all the objects for their use come from the offerings that the faithful have made to God in atonement for their sins. Consequently rather than take pride in the use of all that is given them, let them always fear, since of all religious may be understood what was said of the Levites in the Old Law,

namely, that they should bear the sins of the people.¹ All, then, are obliged to be solicitous for the salvation of those in whose gifts they participate, and we cannot forget this duty without incurring great danger. Hence, as the rule has already said, it is safer for the poor of Christ to be in need than to have plenty. For how can we pretend to observe poverty unless we endure a certain amount of want patiently for God. We might make it a rule for ourselves to abstain from the lawful use of objects allowed us, in proportion as we recognise that we have transgressed by indulging in forbidden satisfactions in the past. We must needs enter by the narrow gate of self-denial in order to reach the broad and spacious land of heavenly joys. Let us always remember the salutary truth that the stricter the life we impose upon ourselves now, the greater shall be the glory enjoyed in heaven.

Let there be no contention among you—or, at least, put an end to it as quickly as possible—lest a little anger grow into hatred, and so make of a mote a beam, and render the soul guilty of murder; for you read, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (1 John iii. 15).

This is the way that sins often grow. When we are unwilling to keep back the idle word, we soon pass to words that are really evil: we give way to grumbling and detraction—perhaps

¹ “Only the sons of Levi may serve me in the tabernacle and bear the sins of the people” (Numb. xviii. 23).

to disputes and strife, thence to anger and hatred. Thus is verified the saying of the Wise Man: "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little" (*Ecclesiasticus* xix. 1). Whilst one fault gives rise to another, a constant state of imperfection is established. Hence the prophet says: "Woe to you that draw iniquity with cords of vanity" (*Isaias* v. 8); and the Psalm: "They have lengthened their iniquity: the Lord, who is just, will cut the necks of sinners" (*Ps.* cxxviii. 3, 4).

It must always be our chief care to be on our guard against any sin, for it is better to prevent than to have to amend. Then if, through frailty, we should happen to fall, our fault will be the more easily corrected because it will be quickly recognised. We may apply those words of God to the serpent in this sense: "She shall crush thy head" (*Gen.* iii. 15). The head of the serpent is crushed when sin is corrected as soon as it is committed. Every one of us, then, must be anxious to amend as soon as she feels that she has erred.

The difference between anger and hatred is as the difference between the mote and the beam. Hatred is an inveterate state of bad feeling. It may well be that one is angry with another and at the same time deeply concerned for his amendment and correction. But one can have no such good object in view in hating a neighbour. Anger disturbs the sight of the mind, but hatred destroys it entirely; so that the Apostle could say: "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother,

is in darkness" (1 John ii. 9). When we are tempted to anger we do not recognise the injustice of our feeling, so that as soon as possible we should endeavour to regain the calm of meekness. Otherwise a persistent movement of anger may easily be turned into hatred of the one we will not forgive.

CHAPTER X

OF ASKING PARDON AND FORGIVING OFFENCES

WHOSOEVER wounds another by offensive language, by wishing her evil, or reproaching her with her faults, should be mindful to make satisfaction as soon as possible; and she who was injured must pardon without many words.

They do a serious wrong who offend others by injurious language. St Paul says of them: "Railers shall not possess the Kingdom of Heaven" (1 Cor. vi. 10). And our Lord says in the Gospel: "Whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. v. 22). As, then, they offend seriously, they ought to make their repentance earnestly, with all their heart, and in deep humility they should ask pardon of the person that has been injured.

And she who was injured must pardon without many words.

"That one who takes a long time to effect a reconciliation with his neighbour," says St Isidore, "also takes a long time to appease God in his own regard." Vainly do we seek the friendship and

favour of God, if we put off reconciliation with our neighbour. Now there are some that rely much upon their own merits and are slow to forgive those that have injured them. But it signifies little that they have not other sins on their conscience if they are not ready to grant forgiveness, for it is of itself a great fault to be slow in making reconciliation. We learn on the authority of Divine Truth itself that the servant who owed the ten thousand talents had the whole debt remitted when he gave expression to his sorrow. But when he refused to condone his fellow-servant that owed a hundred pence, he was forced to pay even what had been remitted.

In this example we see that if we do not forgive from our hearts the offences we suffer, there will be demanded of us too an account of those debts which we rejoice to think have been forgiven.

But if both have offended they must forgive each other. The reason of this is that you may be duly disposed for prayer, which, the more frequent it is, the more holy it should be.

We say daily to God :—"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Now if we do not forgive them that trespass against us, we condemn ourselves by the very words of that prayer. We do our utmost to excite the displeasure of God against ourselves; we draw down upon ourselves a curse rather than a blessing. In this way the prayer that should be a source of healing brings us harm, and the sins

that our prayer should lessen, are rather augmented. The earnest prayers of faithful souls are efficacious in satisfying for the daily faults and imperfections from which our life can hardly be free. For these faithful ones have the right to say: "Our Father who art in Heaven," because by the second birth of water and the Holy Spirit they are truly the children of their heavenly Father.

Such a prayer, then, quite effaces the small defects of every-day occurrence. It likewise effaces the remains of those greater sins committed in the past, and from which the life of the faithful has been freed by repentance.

But as to obtain these favours we say with earnest meaning—"forgive us our trespasses" (of which there must always be some to be forgiven), so with equal intent should we say: "as we forgive them that trespass against us." Let our actions, then, correspond with our words. Let us forgive them that come to ask our pardon and the act will stand to our credit as the bestowal of an alms. There are various kinds of alms-deeds that contribute to obtain the remission of our sins; but none is of greater efficacy than that by which we bestow from our hearts the forgiveness of the injuries done to us. It is not great generosity to be well disposed and kind towards those who have done us no wrong; but it is a mark of great virtue and magnanimity to love our enemy and to wish well to them that would do us wrong. We shall act thus if we listen to Jesus Himself saying to

us: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you" (Matt. v. 44).

This high degree of charity belongs to the perfect children of God, whereunto every faithful disciple of our Lord must tend, training the soul to this state by prayer and interior self-discipline. Nevertheless, this great exercise of love is not found in the majority of Christians. But still believing that we shall be heard when we say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," we shall without doubt receive the promised answer, provided that we who are not yet so advanced in virtue as to love our enemies will yet heartily forgive any one who has injured us and asks our pardon. For we ourselves expect forgiveness when we say: "Forgive us, as we forgive them that trespass against us" — that is, so forgive us that seek pardon from Thee, as we forgive them that ask it of us. And indeed if we consider the matter, he that asks pardon of the person he has offended, is no longer to be considered an enemy whom it is difficult to love, as he was when actually inflicting the injury. On the other hand, the person who is not willing to forgive a neighbour pleading for pardon and truly regretting his evil deed, must not consider that his own misdeeds are forgiven by God. Divine Truth does not contradict itself, and it says: "If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you

your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences" (Matt. vi. 14, 15).

But one who is often tempted to anger, and as speedily asks pardon of the one she acknowledges she has injured, is better than one not so soon moved to anger, and yet less inclined to ask pardon. She that will not forgive her sister, must not hope to obtain of God what she asks in her prayers.

Some are easily aroused to angry feelings and easily regain their calmness; others are moved more slowly, but remain longer under the influence of the passion. Others, again, are in the worse condition of being easily stirred to anger and of being slow to overcome it. On the other hand, we find some that quickly resent, but just as quickly conquer all ill-natured feelings.

In these different classes it is clearly understood that the last approach more closely to the state of perfect tranquillity of mind, and that those of the third class surpass in evil those indicated in the second.

Let us, then, ponder how serious a fault is this anger whereby, losing our peace of mind, we spoil the image of heavenly peace within us. Through anger justice is lost, as it is written: "The anger of man worketh not the justice of God" (James i. 20). Besides, this anger deprives us of the advantages of our community life, as it is said: "Be not a friend to an angry

man. . . . Lest perhaps thou learn his ways, and taste scandal to thy soul" (Prov. xxii. 24, 25). For one that cannot govern self by reason must expect to be left alone as are creatures that have no reason. It may not be that one go so far in passion as to raise the hand to strike; but oftener it will happen that the victim of anger will cast darts of evil speech. Or again, when the soul is aroused by this vice, it will disdain to hold even ordinary conversation with the neighbour, and as time goes on there will be a complete separation. Then more violent attacks will come, ordinary causes of offence will exasperate to a greater degree, the distorting sight of the angered person will turn the mote into a beam, and anger then settles into positive hatred.

If we get to this state we are always fearful of being looked down upon by others; we will not deign to put up with the slightest word against us, and if there should have been any difference between us, we are ashamed to be the first to offer satisfaction.

So the unmortified spirit, wishing to excel in this life, rejects humility; it often wishes within itself for reconciliation, but has not the courage to be the first to go and seek it.

Let us then reflect on what Jesus Christ, our Lord, has done to show us the pitifulness of such an evil disposition. Between us and God we had caused a breach by our sins—and God was

the first to apply the remedy. He sends to us His ambassadors to call us, the offenders, back to peace. Let us blush, then, for our pride, and let it cause us shame to think we are unwilling to make amends to our neighbour, seeing that God Himself, whom we offended, has come forward in the person of His messengers to ask us to be reconciled to Him.

If there is any one who will never ask pardon, or does not ask it from her heart, though she is not put out of the convent, yet her religious life is useless.

Our Lord has so great a concern about our reconciliation that He suffers His gifts to be left before the altar, and service due to Him left unperformed, so that you may first go and remove the cause of dissension and break off the enmity that exists between you and your neighbour.

Notwithstanding, we feel no shame for our uncharitableness, we suffer it to continue day after day, and we keep up an uninterrupted state of discord.

It should be borne in mind that God punishes not only those that give way to anger and deeds of malice, but also those that cause anger in others, and then neglect and disdain to make peace. For they that are troubled and suffer wrongs must necessarily be pained and feel some impulse to anger. But they that have inflicted the injury, feel nothing of the trouble or the wrong themselves. Wherefore Almighty God would have the

person who is free from any influence of passion make the first advance to the neighbour who is in sorrow, and therefore is not altogether free in mind, thereby showing that the real evil of the sin lies rather to the charge of the one who has been the cause of it. But we are sometimes slow to amend in this manner. For very trifling reasons we continue to sadden our sisters, and as though we had done no wrong we give no thought to the satisfaction we ought to make. We forget our fault, and thus remain in the same habitual state for a long period. We give no heed to the fact that our punishment will be the greater as the discord is of longer duration. As long as friendship lasts, nothing that can bring about ill-feeling is easily listened to or believed. But when once enmities creep in, almost all that is done or said or heard tend to make the spirit of dissension more intense and lasting. In this frame of mind one can see every little wrong only in its worst aspect, and as a result each trivial offence intensifies the bitter feeling. Wherefore our Lord bids us leave our gift before the altar and go first to be reconciled with our neighbour, to teach us that if we may not put off or dissemble reconciliation at the moment when we are about to enter upon divine worship, with far more reason must we fulfil our duty in this respect without delay on all other occasions. If perchance we give way to anger, the command is that we put an end to our anger or dissension before the close of day.

These are the words by which we are urged :
 "Let not the sun go down upon your anger"
 (Eph. iv. 26).

Contrary to all this, we not only allow our animosity to last beyond the day, but we often seek to entrap one another, to supplant our neighbour by word or deed ; we tear and devour one another in a kind of insanity. There is indeed in this a likeness to the madman or the one possessed by the evil spirit, who with their teeth rend and tear their own limbs.

To no purpose, then, does any one live in a monastery in a state of bitterness against others, since such a religious neither gives pleasure to God by her sacrifices nor makes any progress in virtue.

"Beware, therefore, of hard words."

Solomon says on this matter : "A mild answer breaketh wrath : but a harsh word stirreth up fury" (Prov. xv. 1). And again it is written : "A sweet word multiplieth friends and appeaseth enemies" (Eccles. vi. 5). St Paul also writes to the Galatians : "You, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. vi. 1).

These, therefore, that aspire to sanctity must beware of hard words.

Yet, should they chance to escape one's mouth, let the tongue that has caused the wound apply the cure.

Before all things let us give our greatest attention

to refraining from annoying any one by harsh speech. And if, on any occasion, we fail in this respect through weakness, it behoves us to offer satisfaction immediately, and as an antidote to our unkind words, express our regret in a manner kind and soothing. So shall the balm of humble acknowledgment heal the wound of ill-feeling. But, as we have said already, it is far better to be guarded against such a failing beforehand than to atone for it when it is committed. For this reason the religious should set a guard upon her mouth that she may not sin by the tongue—especially when the “sinner rises against her”—that is to say, when any one causes her pain by calumny or insult. For there will ever be found some that are envious and overbearing, to exercise the virtue of the servants of God.

Wherefore as it is written in Ecclesiasticus : “ If thou have understanding, answer thy neighbour ; but if not let thy hand be upon thy mouth lest thou be surprised in an unskilful word and be confounded ” (Eccles. v. 14).

But if you who, being superiors, are obliged to keep up religious observance should use hard words in your correction, though you should perceive that you had exceeded due bounds therein, it is not required that you ask pardon of your subjects, lest by having too great a regard for humility, you should weaken your authority in governing those who ought to be subject to you.

It happens at times to the best of superiors that whilst they are full of zeal in correcting an evil that demands their attention, they overstep the bounds of moderation and allow the tongue to utter words that are not in keeping with the charity that should be in the heart. In such cases we may apply the divine precept given through Moses: "If some one have gone with a neighbour to the wood to hew wood, and in cutting down the tree the axe slipped out of his hand, and the iron, slipping from the handle, struck his friend and killed him: he shall flee to one of the cities afore-said and live: lest perhaps the next kinsman of him whose blood was shed, pushed on by his grief, should pursue and apprehend him, and take away the life of him, who is not guilty of death" (Deut. xix. 5, 6).

We may take the words in this sense: We go with our neighbour into the wood when we come to look into our many faults, and we hew down the timber when we set to work with good intentions to remove the evils that we discover. But the axe flies from the hand when the reproof degenerates into bitter invective; the iron slips from the handle when harsh words are added to the correction; and these strike and even slay the neighbour, because the rude and rough treatment repels her from the bond of charity. If a sister be reprimanded in this hasty manner, her disposition is in danger of being turned into hatred.

Then she who inadvertently wounds her

neighbour (as, in the above passage, the woodman does when striking the tree), must flee to the city of refuge and dwell there in security. Being moved to the sighs and tears of penance, she must take refuge in faith, hope, and charity, united in this Sacrament. Then she will not be held guilty of the evil committed, and the kinsman of the injured one will not seek revenge of her. Because the just Judge, who has become related to all of us by the assumption of our nature, does not certainly require atonement for a fault that through faith, hope, and charity, has already come under His forgiveness.

Wherefore the rule continues :—

But, nevertheless, you must ask pardon of God, who knows how well you love those very persons whom you have corrected perchance more severely than was reasonable.

It happens that the bounds of forbearance are exceeded sometimes through a strong feeling of malice and sometimes through true zeal for justice. Sometimes it occurs of set purpose by deliberate speech ; at others, by mere thoughtless excess of words. But our Lord in all these cases regards rather the intention than the actual utterance. And therefore there is ready forgiveness at hand for the offence that has occurred without any malicious design.

There must not be any sensual love among you, all must be spiritual.

Many love their neighbours because they are united by the ties of relationship. And Holy Writ does not condemn this affection. But we must observe that the charity that proceeds from the mere promptings of nature is far different from that which is required of us by obedience to the divine precepts.

Those that have natural affection love their neighbour indeed, but do not thereby attain the sublime rewards promised to charity, for their love rises from a natural instead of a spiritual source. It is the maintenance of charity under all conditions that alone proves us to be the real disciples of our all-powerful Lord.

So that He Himself says: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John xiii. 35).

If this virtue truly fills our heart it will show itself forth in two ways: we shall love our friends in God and our enemies for God's sake.

We may easily and often deceive our judgment with a semblance of love towards our enemy and suppose quite falsely that we bear him real charity. We may know whether we truly preserve charity towards our enemy by this test—if we are never saddened by his success nor elated over his misfortune.

Charity begins with two precepts, but it branches off into numerous obligations.

The love of God and the neighbour is the twofold root of the command, and at once we

distinguish the love of God under three headings : for with the whole heart, with the whole soul, and with all our strength must our Maker be loved.

Here we should take notice that the Divine Word does not only prescribe that we must love God, but defines the degree to which charity must rise.

"With all our strength"—that is to say, if we desire to please God perfectly we must keep back nothing of ourselves from our offering of love. Again, the love of our neighbour contains two great precepts which we find written in different places : "See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another" (Tobias iv. 16). And our Lord's own words are : "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them" (Matt. vii. 12).

Of these two precepts taken from the Old and New Testament, the one shuts out all animosity, and the other bids us cultivate all gentleness. Thus we refrain from any injury to our neighbour by considering what we should be unwilling to bear ourselves: and, on the other hand, the benefits that we might naturally look for, we perform out of kindness, to our neighbour's advantage. Then whilst this twofold object is sedulously kept in view, the heart necessarily inclines to the practice of innumerable other acts of virtue. It is hindered from working itself into a state of anxiety with the desires of inflicting pain upon others: it is aroused from a state of idle torpor to proffer to others what good services it may be capable of.

When we use this vigilance not to inflict upon others what we would not bear patiently from them, we shall also look carefully into ourselves to prevent pride from elating us. For if pride exalt us in this way, it may afterwards make us fall by causing us to despise others. Again, we shall have a guard over ourselves, lest ambitious thoughts lead us to overreach our neighbour, and we shall restrain every desire to be possessed of what belongs to another.

We shall be careful that we always remain pure and free from all unlawful pleasure, even in desire. We shall be careful not to let anger rise within us or cause us to utter a single painful word. We shall be on our guard against feelings of envy or jealousy of our neighbour's happiness. We shall curb the inordinate love of talking that we be not led on to unjust criticisms of others; and finally, we shall give no place to that ill-feeling that easily leads to hatred, nor allow ourselves to give expression to offensive words against our sisters.

On the other hand, if we are intent upon performing towards others the good offices we expect from them, we shall seize every occasion to practise such virtues as the following:— to return good for evil; to reward kind deeds with greater deeds of kindness; to show meekness and forbearance to the troublesome; to exercise gentleness to those that are suffering under feelings of ill-will themselves; to try to establish peace amongst those that are in discord; to

animate the peaceable to maintain true peace ; to provide what is lacking to the needy ; to point out the right way to the wandering ; to soothe the afflicted by words of sympathy ; to calm those that harbour any evil intentions ; to soften by gentle reasoning the threats of those in power ; to lighten the anguish of the oppressed as far as is possible ; to show patience to such as oppose us abroad ; to practise humility and patience combined towards those that are troublesome, through their pride, at home ; to show towards subjects such a spirit of zeal and meekness that there may never be any lack of fairness in our dealings ; to desire the amendment of all faults, in such a degree as not to overstep the limits of piety by false zeal ; to attract the ungrateful to a spirit of love by special attentions ; to pass over in silence those faults that cannot be remedied ; to have a care that silence be not construed into consent in the case of irregularities that cannot be corrected ; so to tolerate those faults that may not be remedied as not to hide the regret that these evils should occasion in us ; to show kindness to the badly disposed, but only in such a manner as not to encourage their abandonment of the way of virtue ; to spend ourselves in the service of our neighbour without becoming vain and causing our own fall, and without at the same time lessening our good services for fear of vanity ; to be ready to bestow whatever we have with the thought of the generosity of Him who is hereafter to reward us ; to

forget our own need when we deprive ourselves of material things for others ; to banish from our thoughts the sadness that tarnishes the brightness of charity if such self-denial seem hard to us.

Since all these virtues flow from the possession of charity, this law of God may well be said to contain many others within it. If once this virtue alone take full possession of the soul, it exercises its manifold effects in all these various good works. So this far-reaching Law of God adapts itself to every kind of circumstance. It is ever the same virtue itself and produces constant effects of virtue in the ever-changing conditions of human life.

This many-sided character of charity is well described by St Paul where he says : "Charity is patient, is kind : charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth," etc. (1 Cor. xiii. 4 *seq.*).

CHAPTER XI

OF OBEDIENCE

OBEY your superior as your mother, showing her all respect and honour, lest God be offended in her. But much more is this due to the bishop or priest, who has the care of you all.

Obedience is a virtue that of its own efficacy implants the other virtues in the soul and safely preserves them when they are established. "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Kings xv. 22), because by sacrifice the flesh of animals is immolated, but by obedience the noble faculty of the will is surrendered to God. Solomon says: "The obedient man shall speak of victories," because when we submit to the word of another out of humility, we internally gain a victory over ourselves. And this obedience is imposed upon us even unto death.

Evil must never be done under obedience—but it sometimes happens that by obedience we may be called upon to forego some good deed of our own choice. Now as, on some occasions, that which obedience ordains us is in no sense

distasteful to us, we must take notice that our obedience is sometimes without any merit if there be anything of self in it. And even if there be nothing agreeable to self-love our obedience may be but of small value. For if some matter of external advantage be commanded, as when a post of honour is allotted to us, we forfeit all the merit of obedience, if we expend ourselves upon this merely from our natural inclination towards this duty. Or, again, supposing that some lowly position be imposed upon us, wherein there is little externally but hardship and contempt, then obedience will have but little merit unless the will sets itself to embrace all these difficulties cheerfully. For otherwise it will discharge the duty heartlessly and only under constraint. Hence we may say that in circumstances difficult to nature, our obedience calls for an exercise of self-will, and, on the contrary, in duties that are pleasant it must exclude self altogether. The reason is because in painful duties obedience is the more praiseworthy as it is subjected to the will of God—and in easy matters it counts for less in proportion as it is counterbalanced by the actual pleasure or honour attached to its performance. Obedience is the ornament that graces innocent souls according to our Lord's words: "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me" (John x. 27).

Indeed the soul that is without sin cannot but delight in following its Redeemer. And on the

other hand, none can remain innocent and refuse to obey that divine voice.

In order that all rules may be duly observed, if any point is not well kept it shall not be negligently passed over, but the superior, whose business chiefly it is, shall take care to see it amended and corrected. But if there should happen anything exceeding her power and judgment, it ought to be referred to the priest or bishop, who has a superior charge over you.

Naturally, these precepts of the rule are set before us that they be observed, and if any of them may have been overlooked, that they be speedily attended to. For we cannot continue to neglect any of these matters without harm to our souls—since we vowed that we would observe all these things in detail and promised to regulate our lives by this rule.

We can apply to ourselves the words of the Psalm: "Thou hast commanded thy commandments to be kept most diligently" (Ps. cxviii. 4); and those of St James: "Now whosoever shall keep the whole law but offend in one point is become guilty of all" (James ii. 10).

Therefore it is the duty of the superior and whoever is responsible for regular observance to refer to the bishop or priest who may hold the higher power such points as she is not able to decide regarding the rule of the community. For if any house of the Canonical Order be subject

to the bishop, it is he who is to be understood by the term *Presbyter* in the rule.

All superiors are appointed in the Church to maintain the established order of things, to correct irregularities, to direct the life and occupations of their subjects by word and example, carrying out the direction of the Apostle: "Be instant in season, and out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke" (2 Tim. iv. 2).

Taking into consideration all kinds of circumstances, superiors must exhort their subjects with words, now of encouragement, and now of warning. The unruly and troublesome they must reprove with severity. They must exhort the obedient, the meek, and the patient to make yet higher progress in virtue.

It is their duty to reprove or to punish the neglectful and the proud. And they must beware of passing over any serious offences. As soon as such are brought to notice they must use all their influence to root them out entirely, mindful of that punishment that the priest Heli incurred on account of the offences of his sons. A word of admonition, repeated if needful, will suffice with those that are ordinarily of good will and disposition. But it is necessary to inflict some form of external punishment on those that show signs of malice, of self-will, of pride, or of insubordination. In these cases the words of Solomon apply: "A fool receiveth not the words of prudence" (Prov. xviii. 2). . . . "Thou shalt beat

the child with a rod and deliver his soul from hell" (xxiii. 14).

She who is your superior must not think herself happy in having authority to govern, but rather in being able to exercise charity by serving others.

They that discharge their duties as superiors with sentiments of pride on account of their authority are not true shepherds, but hirelings. Their object is rather to command than to be of service. They do not look to the advantage of the souls of their subjects, but for some temporal gain. Their desire is for worldly honour, not heavenly glory. Our Lord said of such in the Gospel: "Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward" (Matt. vi. 16).

But those that rejoice to be of service to others in charity copy the example of the Good Shepherd who "came to minister and not to be ministered unto, and to give His life a redemption for many" (Matt. xx. 28).

Those superiors are worthy of their position and carry out their charge according to the design of God who have only these ends in view, namely, to draw others with themselves to God, to take delight rather in the burdens than in the distinctions of their office, to regard their opportunities of exercising charity rather than authority, to look for occasions of doing service to others rather than receiving service from them. This was the spirit of St Paul,

who wrote : " For whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more " (1 Cor. ix. 19).

At the same time, superiors are to be respected by their subjects for the authority vested in them, and consequently the rule says :—

She shall be respected and honoured by you as your superior.

The superior must be respected as holding the place of Christ Himself in the community, as our Lord said to the Pastors of the Church : " He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me " (Luke x. 16).

Therefore the servants of God united in community must show respect to the one who holds the place of their Master, bearing in mind that they have become her subjects for the love of God.

And the good superior, the more she is honoured externally, will fear all the more for herself. She will endeavour to have a lowly opinion of herself, and in her thoughts the first place will be given to those who show her this deference. In this sense the rule continues.

But in the sight of God let her prostrate at your feet.

" The greater thou art," says Holy Writ, " the more humble thyself in all things " (Eccles. iii. 20). " Have they made thee a ruler? be not lifted up; be among them as one of them " (Eccles. xxxii. 1).

Our Lord also says : " Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted " (Luke xviii. 14). Here we learn that a soul is the greater before God as it is lowlier in its own estimation. The rule further indicates what the superior should be in her external life :—

She should be a pattern to all.

As she is placed above others in honour, dignity, and rank, so should she excel all in holiness, that her subjects may find a model for their own lives in her example.

The restless she must correct, the dejected she must comfort, she must bear with the weak, and be patient with all.

She who holds the place of authority must not inflict evils upon others, but be ready to endure them herself, using her meekness as an instrument to train the unruly. A physician of souls must adopt the healing power of virtue to counteract the ills of vice. For this purpose the superior should first study carefully the dispositions of her subjects that she may know what help to offer to each.

Let her be strict with herself in the observance of religious discipline, and prudent in exacting it of others ; and although both love and fear be necessary, yet she must seek rather to be beloved than feared, ever remembering that she must account to God for all.

It is necessary that one who has to teach others in religious life possess the necessary knowledge and be thoroughly trained in the rule herself. For she can only expect discipline amongst her subjects when she practises it herself. She can only instruct her subjects according to what she has learned herself. St Paul's words to the Hebrews illustrate this: "Persevere under discipline. God dealeth with you as with his sons, for what son is there whom the father doth not correct" (Heb. xii. 7).

Now the one who is appointed to govern others must be able to exercise a twofold influence: she must inspire with a salutary fear those that are proud, disobedient, and obstinate; she must attract by a spirit of love those that offer to their Divine Master a willing, humble, and devoted service.

And although both love and fear be necessary, yet she must seek rather to be loved than feared.

It is clear that the more the superior is loved the more readily will her words be attended to. And it is also plain that God is better pleased with service that is given cheerfully from motives of love than that which proceeds from fear. So our Lord said to His disciples: "I will not now call you servants but friends" (John xv. 15). Indeed our Lord does not wish us to fear Him as a stern Master, but rather to love Him as children love their father: He would have us

observe His Law for the love of what is right, rather than for fear of punishment. The superior who exercises a certain measure of judgment over souls, must recollect that there is a higher Judge, namely, God Himself. This thought will animate her to discharge her duties of government with all the more solicitude as she realises what a strict account she will have to render to the all-just Judge for those whose welfare is entrusted to her. For every one should remember the final account to be rendered in order to be ever most diligent in every good work : " In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin " (Eccles. vii. 40).

Therefore you should be the more obedient, having compassion not only on yourselves, but also on her, who is the more in danger the higher she is placed in authority over you.

Every one who is raised to the position of superior over others is exposed to great danger. The higher the grade of superiority, so much the more disastrous would a fall be. " Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required " (Luke xii. 48).

There is great danger in having to attend to the lives of others as well as to one's own : in having to give one's thoughts to temporal as well as to spiritual matters.

A superior has to study her own welfare and yet be careful not to neglect that of her subjects : she must give her attention to others, and yet

not be forgetful of her own needs. She must provide for temporal needs without becoming indifferent to the spiritual. She ought to be most zealous for the spiritual estate of her community and yet be diligent in the management of its temporal affairs.

Hence the members of the community should be all the more ready to obey the superior as they see that she has to labour so constantly for them. And thereby they show consideration both for themselves and for the superior; for themselves because it is to their spiritual benefit—"Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God" (Eccles. xxx. 24); and for the superior who is over them, because they lighten her burden by their willing obedience. Holy Scripture says: "A wise son maketh the father glad" (Prov. x. 1). Spiritual parents are glad and encouraged to greater interest in their children as they see them give heed to spiritual instructions.

May our Lord grant that you, as lovers of spiritual beauty, may observe all these things through a motive of love, and become fragrant with the sweet odour of Christ by a holy conversation, not as slaves under the servitude of the law, but as free children under the liberty of grace.

This prayer of our Holy Legislator is most opportune after the reading of the rule. Reading and preaching are like sowing a field with seed,

and the prayer that follows is as the covering of the seed in the earth. The birds come and devour all the seed that was scattered unless it sink into the soil. So they that sow the seed of God's Word in their hearts at the time of psalmody or reading or preaching must afterwards bury or hide this seed in their hearts lest empty, light, and fitful thoughts of the world come and devour the good seed that was sown.

Hence it is always advisable to have recourse to prayer after reading or preaching that the good influence of the Word of God may be kept in the soul, and spiritual fruit be produced in good works.

As lovers of spiritual beauty.

The religious will not be able to fulfil all these precepts of the rule unless they have a real desire of justice, which constitutes the spiritual beauty of the soul. For no one does well in a spiritual sense without willing it, even though an action may in itself be good.

And become fragrant with the sweet odour of Christ by a holy conversation.

These words clearly refer to the holy life and good name of religious. As the Apostle says: "We are the good odour of Christ unto God" (2 Cor. ii. 15).

"Slaves under the law" are they that serve God merely from motives of fear; "children in grace" are those that serve Him in love.

This grace of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us. By this grace we fulfil the law. Not that the just soul feels the yoke of the law, because where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty. But we freely run along the way of God's commandments if our heart be filled with the Charity of God.

CHAPTER XII

OF FREQUENT MEDITATION ON THE RULE

BUT to the end that you may see yourselves in this little book as in a looking-glass, and that nothing be neglected out of forgetfulness, let it once a week be read unto you.

We are admonished to read the rule in order that it may be deeply graven in our memory. St James says: "He that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1. 25).

This little book may well be called a mirror. In it we are able to see our state of soul, whether it present an appearance of beauty or ugliness, that is to say, whether it be holy or sinful. It will tell us whether we are living a truly regular life, whether we are making progress or losing ground; whether we are pleasing or displeasing in the sight of God. These holy writings show to us the state of our interior life, making known what is fair and what is deformed within the soul.

They indicate how we can cultivate the beauty of holiness, how we may adorn ourselves with the glory of virtues, and how we may cleanse away every stain of sin.

The wicked are accustomed to cover up their evil deeds, they have no wish to recall them to mind, they close their eyes upon all their transgressions as though they would never be remembered. But those that aim at holiness constantly look into the sacred writings to examine their lives, to scrutinise their deeds. And if they find anything reprehensible, inordinate, or out of keeping with their state, they at once use every effort to amend and set it right, according to the light they have received. And in this way they always strive to maintain themselves before God, holy and spotless, in body and in soul. So may these say with the Psalmist: "Then shall I not be confounded, when I shall look into all thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 6). They carry out the advice of St Paul: "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. iv. 23). It may be said of them: "The inward man is renewed from day to day" (2 Cor. iv. 16).

And when you find you have observed all that is written therein, give thanks to God, the Giver of all good.

We have reason to render continual thanks to the Father of Lights from whom descends (as Holy Writ reminds us) "every best gift and every perfect gift" (James i. 17). For no one is any the

better for the gifts of God, whatever they be, if he is ungrateful to the Giver. "What hast thou," says St Paul, "that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7).

With reason, then, we are reminded of this duty, so that we may all of us acknowledge that if there be any good in our lives, it is through God's Grace that we have it. Moreover, if we make any advance in the pursuit of virtue our success can only come from Him. This thought will give fresh impulse to our piety, it will instil into our minds that wisdom which constitutes the piety whereby we worship God, the Father of Lights. We worship Him by our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and we give glory, not to ourselves, but unto Him alone.

But when any one perceives that she has failed in any point, she must be sorry for what is past, take better care for the future, beseeching our Lord that her fault may be pardoned, and that she may never be led into temptation.—Amen.

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